

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

No precise information about the production of *Assemblywomen* survives,¹ but internal evidence dates it to the period of the “Corinthian War” (395–387/6), evidently between 392, the earliest the Athenians could be said to have had “a fleeting glimpse of salvation” (202–3), and the production of *Wealth* in 388; references to proposals to launch a fleet (197–98) and to collect large revenues by levying a new tax (823–29) best suit 391 (after the arrest and dismissal of Conon had cost Athens both his fleet and Persian money), or possibly 390 (after a fleet had actually been launched). Greater precision is impossible, for in *Assemblywomen* allusions to the political status quo are few, and serve mainly to motivate its abolition in favor of a radically new system, a communal utopia under female governance.

As in *Lysistrata* a heroine, Praxagora (“Woman Effective in Public”), leads her fellow Athenian women in a plot to save Athens from male misgovernance: the women disguise themselves as men, pack the Assembly, vote to transfer power to themselves, and elect Praxagora to be their commander. But unlike *Lysistrata*, whose plot was a tem-

¹ A scholium on line 193, citing Philochorus (*FGrH* 328 F 148), preserves discussion about the date, but is vaguely worded and probably corrupt.

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porary intervention designed to force the men to stop the war and return Greece to normality, Praxagora enacts a permanent economic, social, and sexual revolution. Private property is abolished: every citizen is to surrender his possessions to the common store, from which the women will provision all citizens equally, civic buildings having been turned into communal dining halls. Household and family are abolished too: dividing walls are to be removed, and any man may copulate with, and have children by, any woman, provided that the young and the beautiful of both sexes copulate with the old and the ugly first. As for slaves and other non-citizens, they will do the farming and (presumably) all other manual labor, and are debarred from sexual competition with citizens. In the new order, social inequalities based on wealth, age, and beauty are thus eliminated, and with them the principal motives for civic selfishness.

A pair of episodes illustrate the two main elements of the plan and the main problem that threatens their implementation: the desire of some to take unfair advantage of the new system by holding onto the privileges that they had enjoyed under the old. The first is a conversation between a law-abiding citizen, who is preparing to surrender his property, and a selfish sceptic, who hesitates to surrender his own. At the end of the scene the sceptic goes off to claim his place at the communal dinner while still hoping to keep his property. We never learn whether his cheating succeeds, but Praxagora has already explained that under the new regime the desire to own property makes no sense, since everyone will be amply supplied from the common store. The second episode illustrates the new equality of sexual opportunity, which gives priority to the

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old and the ugly. In this more elaborate scene, a young man who has enjoyed the communal feast nevertheless tries to visit his young girlfriend, but is frustrated by the intervention of three hags, each one older and uglier than the last, who stake their legal claim to his services. In the end the young man is dragged off by the last two hags together, since in their case it proves impossible to resolve the question of priority.

The final scene illustrates the benefits enjoyed by men who cooperate with the new regime. Praxagora's husband Blepyrus, earlier counted among the old and ugly and the last to come to dinner, now arrives in the embrace of two young girls, his virility apparently recovered. All that remains is for a tipsy maid to invite Blepyrus and the Chorus, representing all the women, to dance off to the feast, which she describes in opulent terms in a lively song.

In creating the comic utopia of *Assemblywomen* Aristophanes does not set up a true gynecocracy, where women usurp male roles,² but rather takes an old idea (at work also in *Lysistrata*), that polis management should be like household management, to its logical conclusion: the household actually replaces the polis, with the women playing their traditional roles as managers and caregivers. And since the polis is abolished, the men have no duties other than to put on their new clothes, eat, drink, and

² Mythical models included the Amazons (dramatized in an earlier comedy by Cephisodorus) and the Lemnian Women (comedies by Aristophanes and Nicochares); Pherecrates' *Tyrannis* (cf. frs. 152, 269) and Theopompus' *Lady Soldiers* probably featured gynecocracies as well.

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copulate. In effect, the men will enjoy a life of carefree boyhood, with women doing all the chores—not unlike Hesiod's Golden Age, when men "lived like gods, with carefree heart, free and apart from trouble and pain," or the Silver Age, when "a boy was raised by his dear mother for a hundred years, a large infant playing in his house."³ But by relieving men of their responsibilities the women realize important gains too: liberated from confinement in their husbands' households, they may openly associate, enjoy the sexual freedom hitherto reserved for men without need of deception, and rest assured that their household will not be damaged by the men's foolish policies.

Assemblywomen also satirizes contemporary Athenian fondness for political experimentation and theorizing. The political crisis and constitutional reforms precipitated by the loss of their empire in 404, in combination with an Assembly revitalized by the introduction of pay for attendees,⁴ had prompted the Athenians to discuss and debate their democratic system afresh, and also stimulated speculation about ideal systems of government, including women's potential for participation in civic affairs.⁵ The best known of these ideal states, Plato's *Republic*, indeed envisions a regime for elite Guardians that is essentially the same as Praxagora's, save for its abolition of the tradi-

³ *Works and Days* 112–13, 130–31.

⁴ In *Acharnians* of 425 Aristophanes had complained that assemblies were poorly attended and that ordinary citizens were discouraged from speaking up.

⁵ Socrates, for example, reportedly believed in the natural equality of women: Xenophon *Symposium* 2.9.

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tional distinction between men's and women's work, and its system of eugenic breeding.⁶ Since *Assemblywomen* cannot on chronological grounds have caricatured *Republic*, Plato may in fact have been inspired by the play; if both authors drew on a common source, it is unlikely to have been a written one, since Aristotle tells us that Plato's system had no antecedents.⁷

Assemblywomen follows the pattern of Aristophanes' fifth-century comedies in its plot but shows significant changes in formal structure, particularly in its handling of the chorus. Though the chorus plays a prominent role at the beginning and end of the play, its silent and gradual entry, subsequent absences, and minimal involvement in the central scenes are paralleled only in tragedy; there is no parabasis and only a truncated agon; and the choral songs separating episodes are absent from the script, the lacuna sometimes indicated by the note *chorou* ("place for a chorus"), as would become the norm by Menander's time.

Text

One papyrus contains parts of 32 lines of *Assemblywomen*, and four independent medieval MSS preserve the play in whole (R Λ) or in part (A Γ). The MSS divide into two families, with R on one side, and on the other A Γ, which have a common ancestor, and Λ, which derives from a close relative of Γ that was thoroughly corrected from R or a copy of R. Another MS (B), though derived from a

⁶ See especially *Republic*, books 3 and 5.

⁷ *Politics* 1266a31–36, 1274b9–10; he would hardly have mentioned a comic antecedent.

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copy of Γ , contains a number of good conjectures. The Aldine *editio princeps* (1498) was based on a MS (no longer extant) stemming from an ancestor of Λ that incorporated a number of corrections and emendations, some of which are found also in B.

Sigla

II *PMich.* inv. 6649 (IV/V), lines 600–16, 638–54
R Ravennas 429 (*c.* 950)
S Readings found in the *Suda*
A Parisinus Regius 2712 (XIV), lines 1–282
 Γ Laurentianus 31.15 (*c.* 1325), lines 1–1135
 Λ (= Pe1) Perusinus H 56 (XVth)
B Parisinus Regius 2715 (XV), lines 1–1135
a the consensus of R A Γ Λ (1–282), R Γ Λ (283–1135), R Λ (1136–end)

Annotated Editions

F. H. M. Blaydes (Halle 1881).
J. van Leeuwen (Leiden 1905).
B. B. Rogers (London 1902), with English translation.
R. G. Ussher (Oxford 1973).
G. Paduano (Milan 1983), with Italian translation.
M. Vetta (Milan 1989), with Italian translation.
A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster 1998), with English translation.

ΤΑ ΤΟΤ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ, γυνὴ
Ἄττική

ΓΤΝΗ Α, γείτων
Πραξαγόρας

ΓΤΝΗ Β
ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ, ἀνὴρ
Πραξαγόρας

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ Βλεπύρου

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ
ΑΝΗΡ φειδωλός

ΚΗΡΤΚΑΙΝΑ

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ΝΕΑΝΙΣ

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ, μειράκιον

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

Πραξαγόρας

ΧΟΡΟΣ γυναικῶν
Ἄττικῶν

ΚΩΦΑ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΣΙΚΩΝ καὶ
ΠΑΡΜΕΝΩΝ, οἰκέται

τοῦ Γείτονος

ΜΕΙΡΑΚΕΣ δύο

ΤΑ ΤΟΤ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ, γυνὴ	κωφα προσωπα
Ἄττική	ΣΙΚΩΝ καὶ
ΓΤΝΗ Α, γείτων	ΠΑΡΜΕΝΩΝ, οἰκέται
Πραξαγόρας	τοῦ Γείτονος
ΓΤΝΗ Β	ΜΕΙΡΑΚΕΣ δύο
ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ, ἀνὴρ	
Πραξαγόρας	
ΓΕΙΤΩΝ Βλεπύρου	
ΧΡΕΜΗΣ	
ΑΝΗΡ φειδωλός	
ΚΗΡΤΚΑΙΝΑ	
ΓΡΑΤΣ Α	
ΝΕΑΝΙΣ	
ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ, μειράκιον	
ΓΡΑΤΣ Β	
ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ	
ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ	
Πραξαγόρας	
ΧΟΡΟΣ γυναικῶν	
Ἄττικῶν	

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PRA ^X A ^G ORA, an Athenian wife	SILENT CHARACTERS
FIR ^T WOMAN, a neighbor of Praxagora	SICON and PARMENON, Neighbor's slaves
SECON ^D WOMAN, Praxagora's neighbor	TWO GIRLS
BLEPYRUS, Praxagora's husband	
NEIGHBOR of Blepyrus	
CHREMES	
SELFISH MAN	
HERALD, a woman appointed by Praxagora	
FIR ^T OLD WOMAN	
GIRL	
EPIGENES, a young man	
SECON ^D OLD WOMAN	
THIR ^D OLD WOMAN	
MAID of Praxagora	
CHORUS of Athenian women	

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΖΟΤΣΑΙ

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ω λαμπρὸν ὅμμα τοῦ τροχηλάτου λύχνου,
κάλλιστ' ἐν εὐστόχοισιν ἔξηνρημένον—
γονάς τε γὰρ σὰς καὶ τύχας δηλώσομεν·
τροχῷ γὰρ ἐλαθεῖς κεραμικῆς ρύμης ὑπο-

5 μυκτήρσι λαμπρὰς ἡλίου τιμὰς ἔχεις—
ὅρμα φλογὸς σημεῖα τὰ ξυγκείμενα.
σοὶ γὰρ μόνῳ δηλοῦμεν εἰκότως, ἐπεὶ
κὰν τοῖσι δωματίοισιν Ἀφροδίτης τρόπων
πειρωμέναισι πλησίος παραστατεῖς,

10 λορδουμένων τε σωμάτων ἐπιστάτην
όφθαλμὸν οὐδεὶς τὸν σὸν ἔξείργει δόμων.
μόνος δὲ μηρῶν εἰς ἀπορρήτους μυχοὺς
λάμπεις ἀφεύων τὴν ἐπανθοῦσαν τρίχα·
στοὰς δὲ καρποῦ Βακχίου τε νάματος

15 πλήρεις ὑποιγνύσαισι συμπαραστατεῖς·
καὶ ταῦτα συνδρῶν οὐ λαλεῖς τοῖς πλησίον.
ἀνθ' ὧν συνείσει καὶ τὰ τῦν βουλεύματα

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

An Athenian street before daybreak; the stage building represents three houses. From the central house emerges a young figure wearing men's clothing but a woman's mask, and carrying a walking stick and lighted lamp.

PRAXAGORA¹

O radiant eye of the wheel-whirled lamp, fairest invention of skilled artisans (yes, I shall reveal your pedigree and fortunes, for whirled on the wheel by the potter's impetus, you bear the sun's radiant offices in your nozzles): broadcast now the fiery signal as arranged. (*she swings the lamp to and fro*) You alone we make privy to our plot, and rightly, for also in our bedrooms you stand close by as we essay Aphrodite's maneuvers; and when our bodies are flexed, no one banishes from the room your supervisory eye. You alone illuminate the ineffable nooks between our thighs, when you singe away the hair that sprouts there; and you stand by us when stealthily we open pantries stocked with bread and the liquor of Bacchus; and you're an accomplice that never blabs to the neighbors. So you'll be in on our

¹ Praxagora's name means "Woman Effective in Public"; her opening lines parody an unknown tragic source or sources.

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ὅσα Σκίροις ἔδοξε ταῖς ἐμαῖς φίλαις.

ἀλλ' οὐδεμία πάρεστιν ἂς ἥκειν ἔχρην.

20 καίτοι πρὸς ὄρθρον γ' ἐστίν, ἡ δ' ἐκκλησία
αὐτίκα μάλ' ἔσται· καταλαβεῖν δ' ἡμᾶς ἔδρας
23 δεῖ τὰς ἑταίρας κάγκαθιζομένας λαθεῖν,
22 ἀς Φυρόμαχός ποτ' εἶπεν, εἰ μέμνησθ' ἔτι.
τί δῆτ' ἀν εἴη; πότερον οὐκ ἐρραμμένους
25 ἔχουσι τοὺς πώγωνας, οὓς εἴρητ' ἔχειν;
ἢ θαιμάτια τάνδρεῖα κλεψάσαις λαθεῖν
ἥν χαλεπὸν αὐταῖς; ἀλλ' ὅρῳ τονδὶ λύχνου
προσιόντα. φέρε νῦν ἐπαναχωρήσω πάλιν,
μὴ καὶ τις ὧν ἀνὴρ ὁ προσιὼν τυγχάνει.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

30 ὥρα βαδίζειν, ὡς ὁ κῆρυξ ἀρτίως
ἡμῶν προσιουσῶν δεύτερον κεκόκκυκεν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἐγὼ δέ γ' ὑμᾶς προσδοκῶσ' ἐγρηγόρη
τὴν νύκτα πᾶσαν. ἀλλὰ φέρε τὴν γείτονα
τήνδ' ἐκκαλέσωμαι θρυγανῶσα τὴν θύραν.
δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἄνδρον αὐτῆς λαθεῖν.

22–23 transp. Dover

22 Φυρόμαχός R: Σφυρόμαχός A Γ Λ S Σ(i)R: Κλεόμαχός
γρΔ Σ(ii)R γρSΓA

31 -ονσῶν LeFebvre: -όντων a

² A women's festival for Demeter.

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present plans too, all that my friends agreed on at the Scira.²

But not one of the women who are supposed to meet here has shown up, though it's almost light and the Assembly begins any minute. We wenchmen must grab our seats, as Phyromachus once put it, if you still remember,³ and settle ourselves without attracting attention. What can be keeping them? Don't they have the false beards they were told to get? Was it hard for them to swipe their husbands' clothes without getting caught?

A figure dressed like a man and carrying a lamp and bundle enters the orchestra through a wing, leading several other figures, similarly dressed; these and the women soon to follow form the Chorus.

But I see a lamp over there, coming this way. I'll duck aside in case it happens to be a man.

CHORUS LEADER

Time to move! Just now, as we were on our way, the Herald crowed a second time.

PRAXAGORA

And I was up the whole night waiting for you. Now let me call this neighbor of mine out of the house; I'll scratch softly at her door, since her husband mustn't notice.

FIRST WOMAN emerges from the door, dressed in men's clothing.

³ Evidently this Phyromachus (otherwise unknown) had somehow mispronounced *hetairoi* "associates" as *hetairai* "courtesans"; and *hedras* "seats" can also mean "rear ends."

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ГТНН А

35 ήκουσά τοι
ύποδουμένη τὸ κυνῦμά σου τῶν δακτύλων,
ἄτ’ οὐ καταδαρθούσ’. ὁ γὰρ ἀνήρ, ὃ φιλτάτη,
Σαλαμίνιος γάρ ἐστιν φίξύνειμ’ ἐγώ,
τὴν νυχθ’ ὅλην ἡλαυνέ μ’ ἐν τοῖς στρώμασιν,
40 ὥστ’ ἄρτι τουτὶ θοιμάτιον αὐτοῦ λαβον.

ПРАΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ μὴν ὄρῳ καὶ Κλειναρέτην καὶ Σωστράτην προσιουσαν ἥδη τήνδε καὶ Φιλαινέτην.

КОРТФАІА

οῦκον ἐπείξεσθ'; ὡς Γλύκη κατώμοσεν
τὴν ύστάτην ἥκουσαν οἴνου τρεῖς χοᾶς
45 ἥ μὴν ἀποτείσειν κάρεβίνθων χοίνικα.

ПРАΞΑГОРА

*τὴν Σμικυθίωνος δ' οὐχ ὄρᾶς Μελιστίχην
σπεύδουσαν ἐν ταῖς ἐμβάσιν; καὶ μοι δοκεῖ
κατὰ σχολὴν παρὰ τάνδρὸς ἔξελθεῖν μόνη.*

ΓΤΝΗ Α

τὴν τοῦ καπήλου δ' οὐχ ὄρᾶς Γευσιστράτην
50 ἔχουσαν ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ τὴν λαμπάδα;

ПРАΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ τὴν Φιλοδωρῆτον τε καὶ Χαιρητάδον
όρῳ προσιουόσας χάτέρας πολλὰς πάνυ
γυναικας, ὃ τι πέρ ἐστ' ὄφελος ἐν τῇ πόλει.

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FIRST WOMAN

I was just getting dressed when I heard you give the secret knock: see, I wasn't asleep. You know, my dear, the man I live with is from Salamis,⁴ and all night long he was sailing me under the sheets, so I just now got the chance to grab his cloak.

PRAXAGORA

Hey, I see Cleinarete and Sostrate coming, and there's Philainete.⁵

CHORUS LEADER

Get a move on; Glyce⁶ solemnly swore that the last woman here will be fined ten quarts of wine and a bag of chick-peas!

PRAXAGORA

Look, there's Smicythion's wife Melistiche trying to run in her old man's boots!⁷ And I think she's the only one who had no trouble getting away from her husband.

FIRST WOMAN

And there's the barkeep's wife Geusistrate.⁸ See her, with the torch in her hand?

PRAXAGORA

And there's Philodoretus' wife, and Chaeretades',⁹ and a lot more women besides, anyone who's anybody in town!

⁴ These islanders were noted oarsmen.

⁵ Typical names. ⁶ An ordinary name.

⁷ Perhaps this Smicythion (identity unknown) was negligent or impotent. ⁸ A comic version of women's names ending in -strate: *Geusi-* suggests wine drinking.

⁹ Identities unknown.

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ΓΤΝΗ Β

καὶ πάνυ ταλαιπώρως ἔγωγ', ὡς φιλτάτη,
55 ἐκδρᾶσα παρέδυν· ὁ γὰρ ἀνὴρ τὴν οὐχθ' ὅλην
ἔβηττε τριχίδων ἐσπέρας ἐμπλήμενος.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

κάθησθε τοίνυν, ώς ἀν ἀνέρωμαι τάδε
ύμᾶς, ἐπειδὴ συλλελεγμένας ὥρῳ,
ὅσα Σκίροις ἔδοξεν εἰ δεδράκατε.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

60 ἔγωγε. πρῶτον μέν γ' ἔχω τὰς μασχάλας
λόχυμης δασυτέρας, καθάπερ ἦν ἔνγκείμενον.
ἐπειθ', ὅπόθ' ἀνὴρ εἰς ἀγορὰν οἴχοιτό μου,
ἀλειφαμένη τὸ σῶμ' ὅλον δι' ήμέρας
ἔχραινόμην ἐστῶσα πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

65 κάγωγε· τὸ ξυρὸν δέ γ' ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
ἔρριψα πρῶτον, ἵνα δασυνθείην ὅλη
καὶ μηδὲν εἴην ἔτι γυναικὶ προσφερής.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἔχετε δὲ τοὺς πώγωνας, οὓς εἴρητ' ἔχειν
πάσαισιν ύμῖν, ὅπότε συλλεγοίμεθα;

ΓΤΝΗ Α

70 νὴ τὴν Ἐκάτην, καλόν γ' ἔγωγε τουτονί.

⁶⁹ ύμῖν R Λ: ἡμῖν A Γ

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Enter SECOND WOMAN on the run.

SECOND WOMAN

I had an awful time, my dear, making my escape and getting over here quietly. My husband stuffed himself with anchovies at dinner last night and was up all night coughing.

PRAXAGORA

(*to Women and Chorus*) Now then, please be seated, so I can put a question to you, now that I see you're all here: have you done everything we agreed on at the Scira?

FIRST WOMAN

I have. First, I've got armpits bushier than underbrush, just as we agreed; then, whenever my husband went off to the agora, I oiled myself and stood in the sun all day getting a tan.

SECOND WOMAN

Me too. I threw my razor out of the house right away, so that I'd get hairy all over and not look female at all.

PRAXAGORA

And you've all got the beards you were told to bring with you when next we met?

FIRST WOMAN

Sure, by Hecate; isn't this one a beauty?

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ΓΤΝΗ Β

κάγωγ' Ἐπικράτους οὐκ ὀλίγῳ καλλίονα.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ὑμεῖς δὲ τί φατε;

ΓΤΝΗ Α

φασί· κατανεύοντι γοῦν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ μὴν τά γ' ἄλλ' ὑμῖν ὁρῶ πεπραγμένα·

Λακωνικὰς γὰρ ἔχετε καὶ βακτηρίας

75 καὶ θαιμάτια τάνδρεῖα, καθάπερ εἴπομεν.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ἔγωγέ τοι τὸ σκύταλον ἔξηνεγκάμην
τὸ τοῦ Λαμίου τοντὶ καθεύδοντος λάθρᾳ.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ σκύταλον ϕ πέρδεται.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

νὴ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτῆρό ἐπιτήδειός γ' ἀν ἦν

80 τὴν τοῦ πανόπτου διφθέραν ἐνημμένος

εἴπερ τις ἄλλος βουκολεῖν τὸν δήμιον.

ἄλλ' ἄγεθ ὅπως καὶ τάπι τούτοις δράσομεν,

ἔως ἔτ' ἐστὶν ἄστρα κατὰ τὸν οὐρανόν·

ἡκκλησία δ', εἰς ἦν παρεστκενάσμεθα

85 ἡμεῖς βαδίζειν, ἔξ ἔω γενήσεται.

78 ἐκεῖνο τὸ σκύταλον ϕ Bothe: ἐκεῖνο (ἐκείνων S) τῶν σκυτάλων ὃν a S

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SECOND WOMAN

And mine's a far piece nicer than Epocrates'¹⁰

PRAXAGORA

And what about the rest of you?

FIRST WOMAN

They've got them; see, they're nodding yes.

PRAXAGORA

And I see you've taken care of everything else: you've got Spartan boots and walking sticks and men's cloaks, just as we said.

FIRST WOMAN

I've brought Lamius' shillelagh; I took it as he slept.

SECOND WOMAN

That must be the shillelagh he uses to fart!¹¹

PRAXAGORA

By Zeus the Savior, if he wore old All-Eyes' leather jacket he'd be the very man to provide fodder for the public executioner.¹² But let's get on with the next items of business, while there are still stars in the sky. The Assembly we're prepared to attend begins at dawn.

¹⁰ A populist politician nicknamed "shield-bearer" because of his imposing beard (*Platon fr. 130*).

¹¹ Presumably this unidentifiable Lamius (according to the scholia, a nickname for one Mnesitheus) was likened to the fabled ogre Lamia, who carried a stick and "farted when captured" (*Wasps 1177*).

¹² Argus was the many-eyed giant sent by Hera to stand guard over Zeus' human favorite, Io, whom she had turned into a heifer.

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ГТНН А

νὴ τὸν Δῖ, ὥστε δεῖ γε καταλαβεῖν ἔδρας
ὑπὸ τῷ λίθῳ τῶν πρυτάνεων καταντικρύ.

ГТНН В

ταυτί γέ τοι νὴ τὸν Δῖν ἐφερόμην, ἵνα πληρουμένης ξαίνοιμι τῆς ἐκκλησίας.

ПРАЗАГОРА

πληρουμένης, τάλαινα;

ГТНН В

90 νὴ τὴν Ἀρτεμιν
ἔγωγε. τί γὰρ ἀν χειρον ἀκροώμην ἄρα
ξαίνουσα; γυμνὰ δὲ ἐστί μου τὰ παιδία.

ПРАΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἰδού γέ σε ξαίνουσαν, ἦν τοῦ σώματος
οὐδὲν παραφῆναι τοῖς καθημένοις ἔδει.

οὐκοῦν καλά γ' ἀν πάθοιμεν, εἰ πλήρης τύχου
ό δῆμος ὃν κάπειθ' ὑπερβαίνουσά τις
ἀναβαλλομένη δείξει τὸν Φορμίσιον.
ἢν δ' ἐγκαθεζώμεσθα πρότεραι, λήστομεν
ξυστειλάμεναι θαῖμάτια· τὸν πώγωνά τε
ὅταν καθῶμεν ὃν περιδησόμεσθ' ἔκει,
τίς οὐκ ἀν ἡμᾶς ἄνδρας ἡγήσαιθ' ὁρῶν;
Ἄγυρριος γοῦν τὸν Προνόμου πώγων' ἔχων
λέληθε· καίτοι πρότερον ἦν οὗτος γυνή.
νυνὶ δ', ὥρᾳς, πράττει τὰ μέγιστ', ἐν τῇ πόλει.
τούτου γέ τοι, νὴ τὴν ἐπιοῦσαν ἡμέραν,
τόλμημα τολμῶμεν τοσοῦτον οὕνεκα,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

FIRST WOMAN

Right you are, so we've got to grab some seats under the rock,¹³ right in front of the Chairmen.

SECOND WOMAN

(producing a knitting basket) That's exactly why I brought this along, to get some knitting done while the Assembly's filling up.

PRAXAGORA

Filling up, stupid?

SECOND WOMAN

Sure, by Artemis. Won't I be able to listen just as well while I knit? And my kids have nothing to wear.

PRAXAGORA

Listen to you: knitting! When you shouldn't be showing any part of your body to the men. Wouldn't we be in a fine fix if the citizenry's all there and then some woman has to climb over them, hitching up her clothes and flashing her—Phormisius!¹⁴ If we're the first to take our seats, no one will notice that we're wearing our cloaks wrapped tight. And when we unfurl the beards we'll tie on over there, what onlooker will think we're not men? Take Agyrrhius: now that he's wearing Pronomus' beard he passes for a man; and yet this very man used to be a woman.¹⁵ And now look at him, he's top cock in the city. And it's because of him, I swear by this dawning day, that we must dare such

¹³ I.e. the speaker's platform.

¹⁴ See *Frogs* 965.

¹⁵ Agyrrhius was a wealthy politician who recently had successfully proposed the introduction of Assembly pay; Pronomus is otherwise unknown.

ARISTOPHANES

ἢν πως παραλαβεῖν τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα
δυνώμεθ' ὥστ' ἀγαθόν τι πρᾶξαι τὴν πόλιν.
νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὔτε θέομεν οὔτ' ἐλαύνομεν.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

110 καὶ πῶς γυναικῶν θηλύφρων ξυνουσία
δημηγορήσει;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

πολὺ μὲν οὖν ἄριστά που.
λέγουσι γὰρ καὶ τῶν νεανίσκων ὅσοι
πλεῖστα σποδοῦνται, δεινοτάτους εἶναι λέγειν.
ἡμῖν δ' ὑπάρχει τοῦτο κατὰ τύχην τινά.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

115 οὐκ οἶδα· δεινὸν δ' ἔστιν ἡ μὴ μπειρία.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οὔκουν ἐπίτηδες ξυνελέγημεν ἐνθάδε,
ὅπως προμελετήσωμεν ἀκεῖ δεῖ λέγειν;
οὐκ ἀν φθάνοις τὸ γένειον ἀν περιδούμένη
ἄλλαι θ' ὅσαι λαλεῖν μεμελετήκασί που.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

120 τίς δ', ὁ μέλ', ἡμῶν οὐ λαλεῖν ἐπίσταται;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἴθι δὴ σὺ περιδοῦ καὶ ταχέως ἀνὴρ γενοῦ.
ἔγὼ δὲ θεῖσα τοὺς στεφάνους περιδήσομαι
καύτῃ μεθ' ὑμῶν, ἢν τί μοι δόξῃ λέγειν.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

δεῦρ' ὁ γλυκυτάτη Πραξαγόρα· σκέψαι, τάλαν,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

a daring deed, hopeful that somehow we can take over the government and do something good for the city. As it is, our city is oarless and becalmed.

FIRST WOMAN

But how can a congregation of women, with women's minds, expect to address the people?

PRAXAGORA

Much better than anybody, that's how. They say that the young men who've been reamed the most are also the most effective orators. And as luck would have it, that's exactly what nature suits us for!

FIRST WOMAN

I'm not so sure: inexperience is a dangerous thing.

PRAXAGORA

Well, isn't that why we've gathered here, to practice what we're going to say over there? You can't attach your beard too soon; and the same goes for the others who I'm sure have been practicing how to gab.

FIRST WOMAN

Is there anyone here, my friend, who hasn't got the gift of gab?

PRAXAGORA

All right then, you attach your beard and be a man; I'll put these garlands aside and attach my own, in case I decide to do some speaking too.

SECOND WOMAN

(holding a mirror) Come here, darling Praxagora. Look,

ARISTOPHANES

125 ὡς καὶ καταγέλαστον τὸ πρᾶγμα φαίνεται.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

πῶς καταγέλαστον;

ΓΤΝΗ Β

ωσπερ εἴ τις σηπίαις
πώγωνα περιδήσειεν ἐσταθευμέναις.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ὅ περιστίαρχος, περιφέρειν χρὴ τὴν γαλῆν.
πάριτ' ἐσ τὸ πρόσθεν. Ἀρίφραδες, παῦσαι λαλῶν·
130 κάθιζε παριών. τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται;

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ἐγώ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

περίθου δὴ τὸν στέφανον τύχαγαθῆ.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ἰδού.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

λέγοις ἄν.

ΓΤΝΓ Α

εἴτα πρὶν πιεῖν λέγω;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἰδοὺ πιεῖν.

¹⁶ Pointing up the incongruity of beards against the pale (and here insufficiently tanned) complexions of the women.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

my dear, how ridiculous this is.

PRAXAGORA

Why ridiculous?

SECOND WOMAN

It's like somebody bearded a grilled squid!¹⁶

PRAXAGORA

(*moving to the platform and speaking as Herald*) Purifier, please make your rounds with the sacrificial cat.¹⁷ All move into the sanctified area. Ariphrades,¹⁸ stop chattering; move forward and take your seat. Who wishes to address the Assembly?

FIRST WOMAN

I do.

PRAXAGORA

Then put on the garland, and may your speech be propitious.

FIRST WOMAN

Ready.

PRAXAGORA

You may speak.

FIRST WOMAN

Don't I get a drink first?

PRAXAGORA

Drink?

¹⁷ Actually the Assembly was purified with a piglet; the women, normally confined to the house, think of a housepet.

¹⁸ Otherwise unknown.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΤΝΗ Α

τί γάρ, ὁ μέλ', ἐστεφανωσάμην;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀπιθ' ἐκποδών τοιαῦτ' ἀν ήμᾶς ἡργάσω
κάκεῖ.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

135 τί δ'; οὐ πίνουσι κάν τὴκκλησίᾳ;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἰδού γε σοὶ πίνουσι.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

νὴ τὴν Ἀρτεμιν,

καὶ ταῦτα γ' εὔζωρον. τὰ γοῦν βουλεύματα
αὐτῶν, ὅσ' ἀν πράξωσιν ἐνθυμουμένοις,
ῶσπερ μεθύσοντων ἐστὶ παραπεπληγμένα.

140 καὶ νὴ Δία σπένδουσί γ'. ἦ τίνος χάριν
τοσαῦτ' ἀν ηὔχοντ', εἴπερ οἶνος μὴ παρῆν;
καὶ λοιδοροῦνται γ' ὕσπερ ἐμπεπωκότες,
καὶ τὸν παροινοῦντ' ἐκφέρουσ' οἱ τοξόται.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

σὺ μὲν βάδιζε καὶ κάθησ'. οὐδὲν γὰρ εἶ.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

145 νὴ τὸν Δί', ἥ μοι μὴ γενειᾶν κρεῖττον ἦν.
δύψῃ γάρ, ὡς ἔοικ', ἀφανανθήσομαι.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἔσθ' ητις ἐτέρα βούλεται λέγειν;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

FIRST WOMAN

Well, sir, why else did I put on a garland?¹⁹

PRAXAGORA

Get off of there! You would have done the same thing to us in the real Assembly.

FIRST WOMAN

What? Don't they drink in the real Assembly?

PRAXAGORA

Listen to you, "don't they drink"!

FIRST WOMAN

They do, by Artemis, and straight shots at that! When you think about what they get up to, their decrees are like the ravings of drunkards. And they certainly pour libations too: why else would they make those long prayers, if they didn't have wine? And they yell at each other like drunks, and the police remove the guy who's had too much.

PRAXAGORA

You go and sit down. You're worthless!

FIRST WOMAN

I swear I would have been better off without this beard—I'm absolutely parched with thirst!

PRAXAGORA

Is there anyone else who wishes to speak?

¹⁹ Garlands were worn not only by speakers in assembly but also at symposia.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΤΝΗ Β

ἐγώ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἴθι δὴ στεφανοῦ· καὶ γὰρ τὸ χρῆμ’ ἐργάζεται.
ἄγε νυν ὅπως ἀνδριστὶ καὶ καλῶς ἐρεῖς
150 διερεισαμένη τὸ σχῆμα τῇ βακτηρίᾳ.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

ἔβουλόμην μὲν ἔτερον ἀν τῶν ἡθάδων
λέγειν τὰ βέλτισθ’, ἵν’ ἐκαθήμην οὗσυχος.
νῦν δ’ οὐκ ἔάσω, κατά γε τὴν ἐμὴν μίαν,
ἐν τοῖς καπηλείοισι λάκκους ἐμποιεῖν
155 ῦδατος. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ δοκεῖ, μὰ τὸ θεώ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὰ τὸ θεώ, τάλαιμα; ποῦ τὸν νοῦν ἔχεις;

ΓΤΝΗ Β

τί δ’ ἔστιν; οὐ γὰρ δὴ πιεῖν γ’ γῆτησά σε.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὰ Δῖ’ ἀλλ’ ἀνὴρ ὃν τὸ θεώ κατώμοσας,
καίτοι τά γ’ ἀλλ’ εἰποῦσα δεξιώτατα.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

ὦ νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλω—

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

160 παῦε τοίνυν, ώς ἐγὼ
ἐκκλησιάσοντος’ οὐκ ἀν προβαίην τὸν πόδα
τὸν ἔτερον, εἰ μὴ ταῦτ’ ἀκριβωθήσεται.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SECOND WOMAN

Me!

PRAXAGORA

Then don the garland; the plan's under way now. All right then, speak like a man and be cogent; lean hard on your stick.

SECOND WOMAN

I would have preferred that one of the usual speakers had offered the best counsel, so that I could have sat still. But as it is, my vote says we outlaw the installation in barrooms of kegs to hold water. I think it's bad policy, by the Two Goddesses.²⁰

PRAXAGORA

By the Two Goddesses, you bungler? Where is your mind?

SECOND WOMAN

What's the matter? I didn't ask for a drink.

PRAXAGORA

That's true, but you did swear by the Two Goddesses when you were supposed to be a man. And the rest was so good, too.

SECOND WOMAN

Oh! By Apollo—

PRAXAGORA

No, stop. (*taking the garland herself*) I won't take another step on the road to being an assemblywoman until everything's exactly right.

²⁰ I.e. Demeter and Persephone, a woman's oath.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΤΝΗ Β

φέρε τὸν στέφανον· ἐγὼ γὰρ αὖ λέξω πάλιν.
οἶμαι γὰρ ηδη μεμελετηκέναι καλῶς.

165 ἐμοὶ γάρ, ὦ γυναῖκες αἱ καθήμεναι,—

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

γυναῖκας αὖ, δύστηνε, τοὺς ἄνδρας λέγεις;

ΓΤΝΗ Β

δι' Ἐπίγονόν γ' ἐκεῖνον· ἐπιβλέψασα γὰρ
ἐκεῖσε πρὸς γυναῖκας ωόμην λέγειν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἄπερρε καὶ σὺ καὶ κάθησ' ἐντευθενί·

170 αὐτὴ γὰρ ὑμῶν γ' ἔνεκά μοι λέξειν δοκῶ
τονδὶ λαβοῦσα. τοῖς θεοῖς μὲν εὔχομαι
τυχεῖν κατορθώσασα τὰ βεβουλευμένα.
ἐμοὶ δ' ἵσον μὲν τῆσδε τῆς χώρας μέτα
ὅστονπερ ὑμῖν ἄχθομαι δὲ καὶ φέρω

175 τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἀπαντα βαρέως πράγματα.
ὅρῳ γὰρ αὐτὴν προστάσι χρωμένην
ἀεὶ πονηροῖς. καν τις ἡμέραν μίαν
χρηστὸς γένηται, δέκα πονηρὸς γίγνεται.
ἐπέτρεψας ἐτέρῳ πλείον' ἔτι δράσει κακά.

180 χαλεπὸν μὲν οὖν ἄνδρας δυσαρέστους νουθετεῖν,
οἱ τοὺς φιλεῖν μὲν βουλομένους δεδοίκατε,
τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἀντιβολεῖθ' ἐκάστοτε.
ἐκκλησίαισιν ἥν ὅτ' οὐκ ἔχρωμεθα
οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν ἀλλὰ τόν γ' Ἀγύρριον
185 πονηρὸν ἥγονύμεσθα. νῦν δὲ χρωμένων

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SECOND WOMAN

Give me back the garland; I want to try my speech again. I think I've got it down nicely now. In my view, assembled ladies—

PRAXAGORA

Again, you loser? You're calling men ladies!

SECOND WOMAN

It's that Epigonus²¹ over there: I caught sight of him and thought I was addressing ladies!

PRAXAGORA

(taking the platform) Shoo, you go back to your seat over there too. (to the seated women) To judge from what I've seen of your abilities it seems best that I put on this garland and make a speech myself. I beseech the gods to grant success to today's deliberations. My own stake in this country is equal to your own, and I am annoyed and depressed at all the city's affairs. For I see that she constantly employs scoundrels as her leaders. Even if one of them turns virtuous for one day, he'll turn out wicked for ten. You look to another one? He'll make even worse trouble. I realize how hard it is to talk sense to men as cantankerous as you, who fear those who want to befriend you and consistently court those who do not. There was a time when we convened no assemblies at all, but at least we knew Agyrrhius for a scoundrel. Nowadays we do convene them, and the people

²¹ Otherwise unknown, although a man with this rare name was listed among the female members of a cult association in the early fourth century (*IG ii² 2346.109*).

ARISTOPHANES

ὅ μὲν λαβὼν ἀργύριον ὑπερεπήγνεσεν,
ό δ' οὐ λαβὼν εἶναι θανάτου φῆσ' ἀξίους
τοὺς μισθοφορεῦν ζητοῦντας ἐν τὴκκλησίᾳ.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην εὖ γε ταυταγὶ λέγεις.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

190 τάλαιν', Ἀφροδίτην ὕμοσας; χαρίεντά γ' ἀν
ἔδρασας, εἰ τοῦτ' εἴπας ἐν τὴκκλησίᾳ.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀν εἶπον.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μηδ' ἔθίζου νῦν λέγειν.

τὸ συμμαχικὸν αὖ τοῦθ', ὅτ' ἐσκοπούμεθα,
εἰ μὴ γένοιτ', ἀπολεῦν ἔφασκον τὴν πόλιν.

195 δτε δὴ δ' ἐγένετ', ἥχθοντο, τῶν δὲ ρήτορων
ο τοῦτ' ἀναπείσας εὐθὺς ἀποδρὰς ὥχετο.
ναῦς δεῖ καθέλκειν τῷ πένητι μὲν δοκεῖ,
τοῖς πλουσίοις δὲ καὶ γεωργοῖς οὐ δοκεῖ.
Κορινθίοις ἄχθεσθε, κάκεῖνοί γέ σοι
200 νῦν εἰσὶ χρηστοί, καὶ σύ νυν χρηστὸς γενοῦ.
ἀργεῖος ἀμαθής, ἀλλ' Ἱερώνυμος σοφός.

²² Probably conflating the Theban alliance of 395 (Lysias 16.13, Andocides 3.25; for the debate cf. Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.5.7–17) with its wider successor (Diodorus Siculus 14.82; for the recriminations cf. Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.18–23, 4.3.17–23); the discredited “supporter” is not certainly identifiable.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

who draw pay praise him to the skies, while those who draw none say that the people who attend for the pay deserve the death penalty.

FIRST WOMAN

Well said, by Aphrodite!

PRAXAGORA

Pitiful: you swore by Aphrodite. Wouldn't it be charming if you spoke that way in the Assembly?

FIRST WOMAN

But I wouldn't have.

PRAXAGORA

Well, don't get into the habit now. (*resuming her speech*) And about this alliance: when we were examining the issue, the people insisted that the city would perish if we did not ratify it. But when it finally was ratified, the people were unhappy, and its staunchest supporter had to leave town in a hurry.²² We need to launch a fleet: the poor man votes yes, the wealthy and the farmers vote no. You get angry with the Corinthians, and they with you;²³ now they're nice people, "so you be nice too."²⁴ The Argives are morons, but Hieronymus is sage.²⁵ And occasionally we get a

²³ Probably referring to the aftermath of the battle of Nemea in 394, when the allies feared that Corinth, which had not assisted their retreat, might join the Spartans.

²⁴ After its democratic revolution of 393/2 Corinth formed a union with Argos and in 392/1 rejected Spartan peace proposals that would have dissolved the union; Athens followed suit.

²⁵ Hieronymus was a prominent general in this period; the reference here is uncertain.

ARISTOPHANES

σωτηρία παρέκυψεν, ἀλλ’ ὄργιζεται
Θρασύβουλος αὐτὸς οὐχὶ παρακαλούμενος.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ώς ξυνετὸς ἀνήρ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

νῦν καλῶς ἐπῆνεστας.

205 ίδια σκοπεῖσθ' ἔκαστος ὅ τι τις κερδανεῖ,
τὸ δὲ κοινὸν ὥσπερ Αἴσιμος κυλίνδεται.
ἢν οὖν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σωθήσεσθ' ἔτι
ταῖς γὰρ γυναιξὶ φημὶ χρῆναι τὴν πόλιν
ἡμᾶς παραδοῦναι. καὶ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς οἰκίαις
ταύταις ἐπιτρόποις καὶ ταμίαισι χρώμεθα.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

εὖ γ' εὖ γε νὴ Δῖ, εὖ γε.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

λέγε, λέγ' ὠγαθέ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ώς δ’ εἰσὶν ἡμῶν τοὺς τρόπους βελτίονες
215 ἐγὼ διδάξω. πρῶτα μὲν γὰρ τάρια
βάπτουσι θερμῷ κατὰ τὸν ἀρχαῖον νόμον
ἀπαξάπασαι, κούχὶ μεταπειρωμένας
ἴδοις ἀν αὐτάς. ή δ’ Ἀθηναίων πόλις,

202 ὄργιζεται Hermann: ορείζεται R: ὄριζεται L: οὐκ ὄριζεται A Γ

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

fleeting glimpse of salvation, but Thrasybulus gets angry that you're not inviting him to take charge.²⁶

FIRST WOMAN

This man's intelligent!

PRAXAGORA

Now that's the way to applaud! And you, the sovereign people, are responsible for this mess. For while drawing your civic pay from public funds, each of you angles for a personal profit. Meanwhile the public interest flounders like Aesimus.²⁷ But listen to my advice and you shall escape from your muddle. I propose that we turn over governance of the city to the women; after all, we employ them as stewards and treasurers in our own households.

SECOND WOMAN

Hear hear! Well said!

FIRST WOMAN

Pray continue, sir!

PRAXAGORA

And their character is superior to ours, as I will demonstrate. First, they dye their wool in hot water according to their ancient custom, each and every one of them; you'll never see them try anything new. But the Athenian state

²⁶ The "fleeting glimpse of salvation" probably refers to Spartan peace terms recently offered, only to be rejected by the Athenians; apparently it was Thrasybulus, the venerable general and stalwart democrat, who had decisively argued against peace (cf. also line 356–57). Praxagora portrays his opposition as selfish (desire for personal credit) rather than patriotic. ²⁷ Prominent since 403, when he had commanded the democratic forces in the civil war (Lysias 13.80), but perhaps currently in eclipse.

εἰ τοῦτο χρηστῶς εἶχεν, οὐκ ἀν ἐσώζετο,
 220 εἰ μή τι καινόν <γ'> ἄλλο περιμπργάζετο.
 καθήμεναι φρύγουσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς φέρουσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 223a τὰ Θεομοφόρι' ἄγουσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 223b πέττουσι τοὺς πλακούντας ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπιτρίβουσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 225 μοιχοὺς ἔχουσιν ἔνδον ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 αὐταῖς παροιφωνοῦσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 οἶνον φιλοῦντ' εὔζωρον ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 βινούμεναι χαίρουσιν ὕσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ·
 ταύταισιν οὖν, ὅνδρες, παραδόντες τὴν πόλιν
 230 μὴ περιλαλῶμεν, μηδὲ πυνθανώμεθα
 τί ποτ' ἄρα δρᾶν μέλλουσιν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῷ τρόπῳ
 ἐῶμεν ἄρχειν, σκεψάμενοι ταυτὶ μόνα,
 ὡς τοὺς στρατιώτας πρῶτον οὖσαι μητέρες
 σώζειν ἐπιθυμήσονται· εἴτα σιτία
 235 τίς τῆς τεκούσης θάττον ἐπιπέμψειν ἄν;
 χρήματα πορίζειν εὐπορώτατον γυνή,
 ἄρχουσά τ' οὐκ ἀν ἐξαπατηθείη ποτέ·
 αὐταὶ γάρ εἰσιν ἐξαπατᾶν εἰθισμέναι.
 τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἔασω. ταῦτ' ἐὰν πείθησθέ μοι,
 240 εὐδαιμονοῦντες τὸν βίον διάξετε.

ΓΤΝΗ Β

εὖ γ' ὁ γλυκυτάτη Πραξαγόρα, καὶ δεξιῶς.
 πόθεν, ὁ τάλαινα, ταῦτ' ἔμαθες οὕτω καλῶς;

²²⁰ suppl. Wilson

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

wouldn't hold on to that custom if it worked just fine; no, they'd be fiddling around with some innovation. Meanwhile the women settle down to their cooking, as they always have. They carry burdens on their heads, as they always have. They celebrate the Thesmophoria, as they always have. They bake cookies, as they always have. They drive their husbands nuts, as they always have. They hide their lovers in the house, as they always have. They buy themselves extra treats, as they always have. They like their wine neat, as they always have. They like a fucking, as they always have. And so, gentlemen, let us hand over governance of the city to the women, and let's not beat around the bush or ask what they plan to accomplish. Let's simply let them govern. Consider only these points: first, as mothers they'll want to protect our soldiers; and second, who would be quicker to send extra rations than the one who bore you? There's nobody more inventive at getting funds than a woman, and when in power she'll never get cheated, since women themselves are past masters at cheating. I'll pass over my other points. Adopt my resolution and you'll lead happy lives.

SECOND WOMAN

Well said, Praxagora my sweet! What skill! Where did you learn such fine talk, my dear?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς μετὰ τάνδρὸς ὥκηστ' ἐν πυκνί.
ἔπειτ' ἀκούονος ἔξέμαθον τῶν ῥητόρων.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

245 οὐκ ἐτὸς ἄρ', ὁ μέλ', ἥσθα δεινὴ καὶ σοφή.
καὶ σε στρατηγὸν αἱ γυναικες αὐτόθεν
αἴρουμεθ', ἦν ταῦθ' ἀπινοεῖς κατεργάσῃ.
ἀτὰρ ἦν Κέφαλός σοι λοιδορῆται προσφθαρείς,
πῶς ἀντερεῖς πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τὴκκλησίᾳ;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

φήσω παραφρονεῖν αὐτόν.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

250 ἀλλὰ τοῦτο γε
ἴσασι πάντες.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλὰ καὶ μελαγχολᾶν.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

καὶ τοῦτ' ίσασιν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ τρύβλια
κακῶς κεραμεύειν, τὴν δὲ πόλιν εὖ καὶ καλῶς.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

τί δ' ἦν Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων σε λοιδορῆ;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

255 τούτῳ μὲν εἶπον ἐσ κυνὸς πυγὴν ὄρâν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

During the displacements²⁸ I lived with my husband on the Pnyx,²⁹ and learned by listening to the orators.

FIRST WOMAN

Then it's no wonder, madam, that you were so impressive and sage. Furthermore, your fellow women hereby elect you general if you succeed with this plan of yours. But what if Cephalus³⁰ confronts you abusively? How do you plan to handle him in the Assembly?

PRAXAGORA

I'll say he's crazy.

FIRST WOMAN

But everyone knows that.

PRAXAGORA

Well, I'll say he's a dangerous psychopath.

FIRST WOMAN

Everyone knows that too.

PRAXAGORA

Then I'll say that a man who makes such crummy crockery will do a terrific job making the city go to pot.

FIRST WOMAN

But what if Neocleides the squinter abuses you?³¹

PRAXAGORA

To him I say, go squint up a dog's butt.

²⁸ I.e. after the Spartan investment of 413 or the battle of Aegospotami in 405. ²⁹ Where the Athenian Assembly was convened. ³⁰ A distinguished orator who ran a pottery business. ³¹ A politician known for using rough tactics.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΤΝΗ Α

τί δ' ἦν ὑποκρούωσίν σε;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

προσκινήσομαι
ἄτ' οὐκ ἄπειρος οὖσα πολλῶν κρουμάτων.

ΓΤΝΗ Α

ἐκεῖνο μόνον ἄσκεπτον, ἦν σ' οἱ τοξόται
ἔλκωσιν, ὅ τι δράσεις ποτ'.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

260 ὡδί· μέση γὰρ οὐδέποτε ληφθήσομαι.
ἔξαγκωνιώ

ἡμεῖς δέ γ', ἦν αἴρωσ', ἐᾶν κελεύσομεν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

ταυτὶ μὲν ἡμῖν ἐντεθύμηται καλῶς.
ἐκεῖνο δ' οὐ πεφροντίκαμεν, ὅτῳ τρόπῳ
τὰς χείρας αἴρειν μνημονεύσομεν τότε·
265 εἰθισμέναι γάρ ἐσμεν αἴρειν τὰ σκέλει.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

χαλεπὸν τὸ πρᾶγμ'. ὅμως δὲ χειροτονητέον
ἔξωμισάσαις τὸν ἔτερον βραχίονα.
ἄγε νῦν ἀναστέλλεσθ' ἀνω τὰ χιτώνια·
νύποδεῖσθε δ' ὡς τάχιστα τὰς Δακωνικάς,
270 ὥσπερ τὸν ἄνδρ' ἐθεᾶσθ', ὅτ' εἰς ἐκκλησίαν
μέλλοι βαδίζειν ἢ θύραζ' ἐκάστοτε.
ἔπειτ', ἐπειδὰν ταῦτα πάντ' ἔχῃ καλῶς,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

FIRST WOMAN

And what if they try to screw you?

PRAXAGORA

I'll screw them right back: I know a good many tricks myself.

FIRST WOMAN

There's only one danger we haven't discussed: if the police jump you, what will you do then?

PRAXAGORA

I'll give them the elbow, like this; they'll never get me in a clinch.

CHORUS LEADER

And if they do hoist you, we'll, well, ask them to put you down.

FIRST WOMAN

Then we've got all of that planned out. But one thing we haven't considered is how we'll remind ourselves to put up our hands when we vote; we're so used to putting up our legs!

PRAXAGORA

That's a tough one; just remember that you vote by undraping your right arm and raising that hand. Now come on, hitch up your slips and put on those boots as quick as you can, just as you saw your husband do when he was off to an Assembly or some errand. Then when you're all dressed

ARISTOPHANES

περιδεῖσθε τοὺς πώγωνας. ἡνίκ' ἀν δέ γε
τούτους ἀκριβώσητε περιηρμοσμέναι,
275 καὶ θαιμάτια τάνδρεῖ, ἅπερ γ' ἐκλέψατε,
ἐπαναβάλεσθε, κἄτα ταῖς βακτηρίαις
ἐπερειδόμεναι βαδίζετ' ἄδουσαι μέλος
πρεσβυτικόν τι, τὸν τρόπον μιμούμεναι
τὸν τῶν ἀγροίκων.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ εὖ λέγεις.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

280 ημεῖς δέ γε
προῖωμεν αὐτῶν· καὶ γὰρ ἔτέρας οἴομαι
ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν ἐσ τὴν πύκν' ἥξειν ἄντικρυς
γυναικας. ἀλλὰ σπεύσαθ', ώστε εἴωθ' ἐκεῖ
τοῖς μὴ παροῦσιν ὄρθρίοις ἐσ τὴν πύκνα
ὑπαποτρέχειν ἔχουσι μηδὲ πάτταλον.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

285 ὥρα προβαίνειν ὕδρες ἡμῖν ἔστι· τοῦτο γὰρ χρὴ
μεμνημένας ἀεὶ λέγειν, ώστε μήποτ' ἐξολίσθη
ἡμᾶς. ὁ κίνδυνος γὰρ οὐχὶ μικρός, ἣν ἀλῶμεν
ἐνδυόμεναι κατὰ σκότον τόλμημα τηλικούτον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ.) χωρῶμεν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν ὕδρες· ἡπείλησε γὰρ
291a ὁ θεσμοθέτης, ὃς ἀν
291b μὴ πρὼ πάνυ τοῦ κνέφους
291c ἥκη κεκονιμένος,
292a στέργων σκοροδάλμη,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

up, tie on your beards. And when you've attached them exactly right, put on the men's cloaks that you stole and drape them correctly. Now lean on those walking sticks as you set off, and sing an old men's song, country-style.

CHORUS LEADER

Great instructions!

PRAXAGORA

Let's go on ahead of them, because I expect some other women from the country will come directly to the Pnyx. Now hurry, because the drill on the Pnyx is, in by dawn or go home with nary a clothespin.³²

Exit PRAXAGORA, FIRST and SECOND WOMAN.

CHORUS LEADER

Gentlemen, it's time for us to march; and gentlemen is what we must always remember to say, and never let it slip our minds. We run no small risk if we're caught dressed up for so dark a deed of daring.

CHORUS

It's off to the Assembly, gentlemen! The magistrate has sounded his warning:
anyone who isn't there bright and early,
covered with dust,
happy with garlic soup for breakfast,

³² Only the first 6000 assemblymen in attendance were paid.

ARISTOPHANES

292b βλέπων ὑπότριψμα, μὴ
 292c δώσειν τὸ τριώβολον.
 293a ἀλλ', ὁ Χαριτιμίδη
 293b καὶ Σμίκυθε καὶ Δράκης,
 ἔπου κατεπεύγων,
 295a σταυτῷ προσέχων ὅπως
 295b μηδὲν παραχορδιεῖς
 295c ὥν δεῖ σ' ἀποδεῖξαι
 ὅπως δὲ τὸ σύμβολον
 297a λαβόντες ἔπειτα πλη-
 297b σίοι καθεδούμεθ', ώς
 297c ἀν χειροτονῶμεν
 ἄπαινθ' ὅποσ' ἀν δέη
 299a τὰς ἡμετέρας φίλας—
 299b καίτοι τί λέγω; φίλους
 299c γὰρ χρῆν μ' ὀνομάζειν.

(ἀντ.) ὅρα δ' ὅπως ὠθήσομεν τούσδε τοὺς ἐξ ἄστεως
 302a ἥκοντας, ὅσοι πρὸ τοῦ
 302b μέν, ἡνίκ' ἔδει λαβεῖν
 302c ἐλθόντ' ὄβολὸν μόνον,
 303a καθῆντο λαλοῦντες
 303b ἐν τοῖς στεφανώμασιν,
 303c νυνὶ δ' ἐνοχλοῦσ' ἄγαν.
 304a ἀλλ' οὐχί, Μυρωνίδης
 304b ὅτ' ἥρχεν ὁ γεινάδας,
 305a οὐδεὶς ἀν ἐτόλμα
 305b τὰ τῆς πόλεως διοι-

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

with a salsa look in his eye,
will not get his three-obol pay.
Hey Charitimides,
Smicythus, and Draces,³³
get a move on,
see to it you don't
strike a false note
in the role you've got to play.
And when we've got
our tickets, let's be sure
to sit close together,
so as to raise our hands in favor
of whatever proposals
our womenfolk may want.
But what am I saying? Menfolk
is the word I ought to have used.

Let's be sure to jostle the assemblymen from town,
who before now
never used to attend,
when their pay was only one obol,
but would sit gossiping
in the garland shops.
Now they fight hard for seats.
Never in the good old days,
with noble Myronides in charge,³⁴
would anyone have dared
to husband the city's affairs

³³ Generic men's names.

³⁴ A highly successful general during the Persian invasions and into the mid-450s.

ARISTOPHANES

305c κεῖν ἀργύριον φέρων
 ἀλλ' ἥκεν ἔκαστος
 ἐν ἀσκιδίῳ φέρων

308a πιεῖν ἄμα τ' ἄρτον αὐ-

308b <τὸς> καὶ δύο κρομμύω

308c καὶ τρεῖς ἀν ἐλάας.
 νυνὶ δὲ τριώβολον

310a ζητοῦσι λαβεῖν, ὅταν

310b πράττωσί τι κοινόν, ὡσ-

310c περ πηλοφοροῦντες.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τί τὸ πρᾶγμα; ποῖ ποθ' ἡ γυνὴ φρούδη στί μοι;
 ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἔω νῦν γ' ἔστιν, ἡ δ' οὐ φαίνεται.
 ἔγὼ δὲ κατάκειμαι πάλαι χεζητῶν,
 τὰς ἐμβάδας ζητῶν λαβεῖν ἐν τῷ σκότῳ
 315 καὶ θοιμάτιον. ὅτε δὴ δ' ἐκεῖνο ψηλαφῶν
 οὐκ ἐδυνάμην εύρεῖν, ὁ δ' ἥδη τὴν θύραν
 ἐπείχε κρούων ὁ κοπρεαῖος, λαμβάνω
 τουτὶ τὸ τῆς γυναικὸς ἡμιδιπλοίδιον
 καὶ τὰς ἐκείνης Περσικὰς ὑφέλκομαι.

320 ἀλλ' ἐν καθαρῷ ποῦ ποῦ τις ἀν χέσας τύχοι;
 ἢ πανταχοῦ τοι νυκτός ἔστιν ἐν καλῷ;
 οὐ γάρ με νῦν χέζοντά γ' οὐδεὶς ὅφεται.
 οἵμοι κακοδαίμων, ὅτι γέρων ὃν ἡγόμην
 γυναῖχ· ὅσας εἴμ' ἄξιος πληγὰς λαβεῖν.

325 οὐ γάρ ποθ' ὑγιὲς οὐδὲν ἐξελήλυθεν
 δράσουσ'. ὅμως δ' οὖν ἔστιν ἀποπατητέον.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

for a handful of money.
No, everyone would come
bringing his own little bag lunch,
something to drink, some bread,
a couple of onions,
and three olives.
Now what they want
is three obols
for doing a public service,
like common laborers.

Exit Chorus.

Enter from Praxagora's doorway BLEPYRUS, an old man dressed in women's slippers and slip.

BLEPYRUS³⁵

What's going on? Where has my wife got to? It's getting near dawn and she's nowhere to be seen. I've been lying awake for ages, needing to shit, trying to grab my shoes and cloak in the dark. I've groped everywhere but couldn't find it, and all the while the dung man kept pounding at my back door, so finally I grabbed my wife's slip here and put on her Persian slippers. Now where oh where could a fellow shit in privacy? Well, anywhere is fine at night; at this hour no one's going to see me shitting. God what a fool I was, getting married at my age! I deserve a good flogging. She surely didn't go out on any decent errand. Anyway, I've got to do my business. (*squats down*)

³⁵ The name means "Peeker."

³⁰⁸ suppl. Sommerstein

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τίς ἔστιν; οὐ δῆπον Βλέπυρος ὁ γειτνιῶν;
νὴ τὸν Δῖ αὐτὸς δῆτ' ἐκεῖνος. εἰπέ μοι,
τί τοῦτό σοι τὸ πυρρόν ἔστιν; οὕτι που
330 Κινησίας σου κατατετίληκέν ποθεν;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τῆς γυναικὸς ἔξελήλυθα
τὸ κροκωτίδιον ἀμπισχόμενος ούνδυεται.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τὸ δ' ἴμάτιόν σου ποῦ 'στιν;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἔχω φράσαι·
ζητῶν γὰρ αὗτ' οὐχ ηὗρον ἐν τοῖς στρώμασιν.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

335 εἶτ' οὐδὲ τὴν γυναικὸν ἐκέλευσάς σοι φράσαι;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δῖ· οὐ γὰρ ἔνδον οὖσα τυγχάνει,
ἀλλ' ἐκτετρύπηκεν λαθοῦσά μ' ἔνδοθεν·
ὅ καὶ δέδοικα μή τι δρᾶ νεώτερον.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ ταῦτὰ τοίνυν ἄντικρυς
340 ἐμοὶ πέποιθας· καὶ γὰρ ἦξύνειμ' ἐγὼ
φρούδη 'στ' ἔχουσα θοῖμάτιον ούγῳ 'φόρουν.
κού τοῦτο λυπεῖ μ', ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐμβάδας.
οὔκουν λαβεῖν γ' αὐτὰς ἐδυνάμην ούδαμον.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR, holding a lamp, appears at Second Woman's window.

NEIGHBOR

Who's that? Surely not my neighbor Blepyrus? By god, that is him. Say, what's that yellow all over you? Maybe Cinesias has hit you with his droppings?³⁶

BLEPYRUS

No. I'm out here wearing my wife's little yellow slip that she likes to put on.

NEIGHBOR

Where's your cloak?

BLEPYRUS

I can't say. I looked for it in the bedclothes and couldn't find it.

NEIGHBOR

And you didn't ask your wife to tell you where it is?

BLEPYRUS

I really couldn't. She doesn't happen to be in; she slipped out of the house on me, so I'm worried that she's up to no good.

NEIGHBOR

By Poseidon, exactly the same thing just happened to me. The woman I live with has gone off with the cloak I always wear. That wouldn't be so annoying, but she's taken my boots too; I couldn't lay my hands on them anywhere.

³⁶ A contemporary dithyrambic poet, teased elsewhere for some defecatory incident (cf. *Frogs* 366, with scholiast).

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον, οὐδὲ ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰς ἔμὰς
345 Λακωνικάς, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔτυχον χεζητιῶν,
ἔς τῷ κοθόρνῳ τῷ πόδῃ ἐνθεὶς ἴεμαι,
ἴνα μὴ γχέσαιμ’ ἐς τὴν σισύραν· φανὴ γὰρ ἦν.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τί δῆτ’ ἀν εἴη; μῶν ἐπ’ ἄριστον γυνὴ
κέκληκεν αὐτὴν τῶν φίλων;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

γνώμην γ’ ἔμήν.
350 οὔκουν πονηρά γ’ ἔστιν ὅ τι κᾶμ’ εἰδέναι.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν ἴμοιιάν τιν’ ἀποπατεῖς, ἔμοὶ δ’
ῶρα βαδίζειν ἔστιν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν,
ἥνπερ λάβω θοιμάτιον, ὅπερ ἦν μοι μόνον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κᾶγωγ’, ἐπειδὰν ἀποπατήσω· νῦν δέ μοι
355 ἀχράς τις ἐγκλήσασ’ ἔχει τὰ σιτία.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

μῶν ἦν Θρασύβουλος εἶπε τοῖς Λακωνικοῖς;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον ἐνέχεται γοῦν μοι σφόδρα.
ἀτὰρ τί δράσω; καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ τοῦτό με
μόνον τὸ λυποῦν ἔστιν, ἀλλ’ ὅταν φάγω,
360 ὅποι βαδιεῖται μοι τὸ λοιπὸν ἥ κόπρος.
νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὗτος βεβαλάνωκε τὴν θύραν,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

By Dionysus, I couldn't find my Spartan boots either. But as luck would have it I had to shit, so I put my feet into these pumps and dashed out. I didn't want to shit on the comforter; just had it cleaned.

NEIGHBOR

What can it be? Maybe one of her lady friends invited her out for breakfast?

BLEPYRUS

That's probably it. She's not a tramp, as far as I know.

NEIGHBOR

Well, you must be pooping a ship's cable; me, I've got to be getting along to the Assembly, if, that is, I can get hold of my cloak; it's the only one I've got.

BLEPYRUS

Me too, as soon as I finish by business; at the moment some sort of choke pear's got my food blockaded inside.

NEIGHBOR

(*disappearing from the window*) Like the one Thrasybulus mentioned to the Spartans?³⁷

BLEPYRUS

By Dionysus yes; it's got me pretty uptight, anyway. (*to himself*) What am I going to do? This present predicament isn't my only anxiety: what's going to happen when I eat something? Where will the poop go? As it is, he's got my

³⁷ Or “against the Spartans;” the allusion is unclear.

ARISTOPHANES

δστις ποτ' ἔσθ' ἄνθρωπος ἀχραδούσιος.
τίς ἀν οὖν ἰατρόν μοι μετέλθοι, καὶ τίνα;
τίς τῶν καταπρώκτων δεινός ἐστι τὴν τέχνην;
365 ἀρ' οἰδ' Ἀμύνων; ἀλλ' ἵσως ἀρνήσεται.
Ἄντισθένη τις καλεσάτω πάσῃ τέχνῃ·
οὗτος γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἔνεκά γε στεναγμάτων
οἶδεν τί πρωκτὸς βούλεται χεζητιῶν.
ὦ πότινι Ἰλείθυα μή με περιύδης
370 διαρραγέντα μηδὲ βεβαλανωμένον,
ἴνα μὴ γένωμαι σκωραμὶς κωμῳδική.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

οῦτος, τί ποιεῖς; οὕτι που χέζεις;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἐγώ;

οὐ δῆτ' ἔτι γε μὰ τὸν Δλ', ἀλλ' ἀνίσταμαι.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

τὸ τῆς γυναικὸς δ' ἀμπέχει χιτώνιον;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

375 ἐν τῷ σκότῳ γὰρ τοῦτ' ἔτυχον ἔνδον λαβών.
ἀτὰρ πόθεν ὥκεις ἐτεόν;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

ἔξ ἐκκλησίας.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἥδη λέλυται γάρ;

³⁶⁴ κατὰ πρωκτὸν B

³⁶⁹ Ἰλείθυα Coulon cl. titulis: Εἰλείθυ(ι)α a S

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

back door bolted, this fellow from Cul-de-Sac. Who will go for a doctor, and what kind? Any of you arsehole experts out there knowledgeable about my condition? Does Amynon know? But maybe he'll say no. Somebody call Antisthenes at any cost! When it comes to grunting, he's the man to diagnose an arsehole that needs to shit.³⁸ Mistress Hileithya,³⁹ don't let me down when I'm bursting and bolted; I don't want the role of comic potty!

Enter CHREMES.

CHREMES

Hey there, what are you doing? Not taking a shit, are you?

BLEPYRUS

Who, me? No indeed, not any longer anyway. I'm on my feet again.

CHREMES

Is that your wife's slip you're wearing?

BLEPYRUS

Yes, it was dark in the house and I grabbed it by mistake. But tell me, where have you been?

CHREMES

At the Assembly.

BLEPYRUS

You mean it's adjourned already?

³⁸ The identity of these men is uncertain, but an ancient commentator says that Amynon was not a doctor but a "prostituted politician."

³⁹ The goddess of childbirth.

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

νὴ Δῖ ὅρθριον μὲν οὖν.
καὶ δῆτα πολὺν ἡ μίλτος, ὁ Ζεῦ φίλτατε,
γέλων παρέσχειν, ἦν προσέρραινον κύκλῳ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ τριώβολον δῆτ' ἔλαβες;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

380 εἰ γὰρ ὥφελον.
ἀλλ' ῦστερος νῦν ἥλθον, ὥστ' αἰσχύνομαι
<κεναῖς ἀπελθῶν χερσίν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

381a οὐδὲν οὖν ἔχεις; >

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Δῖ οὐδὲν ἄλλο γ' ἢ τὸν θύλακον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ δ' αἴτιον τί;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

πλεῖστος ἀνθρώπων ὄχλος,
ὅσος οὐδεπώποτ', ἥλθ' ἀθρόος ἐς τὴν πύκνα.
385 καὶ δῆτα πάντας σκυτοτόμοις ἥκάζομεν
ὅρωντες αὐτούς· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλ' ὑπερφυῶς
ώς λευκοπληθῆς ἦν ἴδειν ἡκκλησία.
ὥστ' οὐκ ἔλαβον οὕτ' αὐτὸς οὕτ' ἄλλοι συχνοί.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδ' ἄρ' ἀν ἐγὼ λάβοιμι νῦν ἐλθών;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

CHREMES

Yes indeed, and before daylight too. And dear Zeus, the ruddle got quite a laugh when they flung it around!⁴⁰

BLEPYRUS

Then you got your three obols?

CHREMES

I wish I had. But this time I was too late, so I'm ashamed to say <I've come away empty handed.

BLEPYRUS

So you've got nothing?>

CHREMES

Nope, absolutely nothing but my shopping bag.

BLEPYRUS

But what made you late?

CHREMES

A huge crowd of people showed up en masse at the Pnyx, an all-time record. And you know, we thought they all looked like shoemakers; really, the Assembly was awfully pale faced to behold. So I didn't get anything, and a bunch of others didn't either.

BLEPYRUS

So if I went there now I wouldn't get anything either?

⁴⁰ Vermilion dye was used to mark those late for Assembly.

^{381a} lacunam susp. Elmsley, suppl. van Leeuwen et Henderson

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

πόθεν;

390 οὐδ' ἀν μὰ Δῖ εἰ τότ' ἥλθες, ὅτε τὸ δεύτερον
ἀλεκτρυὼν ἐφθέγγετ[·].

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οἴμοι δείλαιος.

‘Αντίλοχ[·], ἀποίμωξόν με τοῦ τριωβόλου
τὸν ζῶντα μᾶλλον τάμα γὰρ διοίχεται.
ἀτὰρ τί τὸ πρᾶγμ[·] ἦν, ὅτι τοσοῦτον χρῆμ[·] ὄχλουν
οὕτως ἐν ὕρᾳ ξυνελέγη;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

395 τί δ' ἄλλο γ[·] ἦ
ἔδοξε τοῖς πρυτάνεσι περὶ σωτηρίας
γνώμας καθεῖναι τῆς πόλεως; καὶ τέ εὐθέως
πρῶτος Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων παρείρπυσεν.
κακειθ[·] ὁ δῆμος ἀναβοᾷ πόσον δοκεῖ,
400 “οὐ δεινὰ τολμᾶν τουτοὶ δημηγορεῖν,
καὶ ταῦτα περὶ σωτηρίας προκειμένου,
ὅς αὐτὸς αὐτῷ βλεφαρίδ[·] οὐκ ἐσώσατο;”
οὐ δὲ ἀναβοήσας καὶ περιβλέψας ἔφη,
“τί δαί με χρὴ δρᾶν;”

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

“σκόροδ[·] ὁμοῦ τρύψαντ[·] ὀπῷ,
405 τιθύμαλλον ἐμβαλόντα τοῦ Λακωνικοῦ,
σαντοῦ παραλείφειν τὰ βλέφαρα τῆς ἑσπέρας,”
ἔγωγ[·] ἀν εἶπον, εἰ παρὼν ἐτύγχανον.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

CHREMES

Hah! Not even if you'd got there before the cock stopped crowing!

BLEPYRUS

Oh my, what a blow!

Antilochus, raise not the dirge for those three obols
but for me who yet live: for all I had is gone.⁴¹

But what business could have fetched such a mob together so early?

CHREMES

It could only be that the Chairmen decided to schedule deliberation about the salvation of the city. And right away Neocleides the squinter groped his way to the podium to speak first, but the people started to yell as loud as you please, "Isn't it dreadful that this guy dares to address us on the subject of our salvation no less, when he can't even save his own eyelids?" And he squints around and yells back, "Well, how can I help it?"

BLEPYRUS

If I'd been there I'd have said, "Grind up garlic and figs and add Spartan spurge, and rub it on your eyelids at bedtime."

⁴¹ Parodying Achilles' lament for Patroclus in Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (fr. 138), substituting "those three obols" for "the deceased."

397 προθεῖναι Schömann

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

μετὰ τοῦτον Εὐαίων ὁ δεξιώτατος
 παρῆλθε γυμνός, ὡς ἐδόκει τοῖς πλείοσιν·
 410 αὐτός γε μέντονφασκεν ἴμάτιον ἔχειν.
 κἄπειτ' ἔλεξε δημοτικωτάτους λόγους·
 “όρατε μέν με δεόμενον σωτηρίας
 τετραστατήρου καύτον· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔρω
 ὡς τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πολίτας σώσετε.
 415 ἦν γὰρ παρέχωσι τοῖς δεομένοις οἱ κναφῆς
 χλαιίνας, ἐπειδὰν πρῶτον ἥλιος τραπῇ,
 πλευρῆτις ἡμῶν οὐδέν' ἀν λάβοι ποτέ.
 ὅσοις δὲ κλίνῃ μή στι μηδὲ στρώματα,
 ἵέναι καθευδήσοντας ἀπονειμένους
 420 εἰς τῶν σκυλοδεψῶν· ἦν δ' ἀποκλήγη τῇ θύρᾳ
 χειμῶνος ὄντος, τρεῖς σισύρας ὀφειλέτω.”

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον χρηστά γ'. εἰ δ' ἐκεῖνά γε
 προσέθηκεν, οὐδεὶς ἀντεχειροτόνησεν ἄν,
 τοὺς ἀλφιταμοιβοὺς τοῖς ἀπόροις τρεῖς χοίνικας
 425 δεῖπνον παρέχειν ἀπασιν ἢ κλάειν μακρά,
 ἵνα τοῦτ' ἀπέλαυσαν Ναυσικύδους τάγαθόν.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

μετὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν εὐπρεπῆς νεαρίας
 λευκός τις ἀνεπήδησ' ὅμοιος Νικίᾳ
δημηγορήσων, κἀπεχείρησεν λέγειν
 430 ὡς χρὴ παραδοῦναι ταῖς γυναιξὶ τὴν πόλιν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

CHREMES

After him, that success story Euaeon⁴² stepped forward, wearing only a shirt, most people thought, though he insisted he was wearing a cloak. His speech appealed mainly to the masses: "You see that I'm in need of salvation myself—about four bits would do it—but nevertheless I'll tell you how to save the city and its citizens. If the clothiers donate cloaks at the winter solstice to those who need them, none of us would ever again catch pneumonia. And you should allow anyone who hasn't got a bed or a blanket to sleep in the tanneries after they've washed up; if a tanner won't open his doors in wintertime, fine him three comforters."

BLEPYRUS

By Dionysus, what a noble thought! He'd have won unanimous approval if he'd added that grain dealers should give the needy three quarts for their dinner or face harsh punishment. They could have collected that benefit from Nausicydes!⁴³

CHREMES

Well, after that a pale, good-looking young man sprang to his feet to address the people; he looked like Nicias.⁴⁴ He made a case for handing the city over to the women.

⁴² Identity unknown, but evidently a poor man.

⁴³ A grain magnate mentioned also in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.7.6 and Plato, *Gorgias* 487c.

⁴⁴ Probably the grandson of Nicias the statesman and general, now barely twenty years old (cf. Lysias 18.10).

ARISTOPHANES

εἰτ' ἐθορύβησαν κάνεκραγον ώς εὖ λέγοι,
τὸ σκυτοτομικὸν πλῆθος, οἱ δ' ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν
ἀνεβορβόρυξαν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ
νοῦν γὰρ εἶχον, νὴ Δία.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἥσαν ἥττους· ὁ δὲ κατεῖχε τῇ βοῆ,
435 τὰς μὲν γυναικας πόλλα ἀγαθὰ λέγων, σὲ δὲ
πολλὰ κακά.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ
καὶ τί εἶπε;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ
πρῶτον μέν σ' ἔφη
εἶναι πανούργον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ
καὶ σέ;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ
μή πω τοῦτ' ἔρῃ.
κάπειτα κλέπτην.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ
ἐμὲ μόνον;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ
καὶ νὴ Δία
καὶ συκοφάντην.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

And they all cheered and yelled "well said," this mass of cobblers, while the people from the country made deep rumbles.

BLEPYRUS

That's because they were using their brains, by heaven.

CHREMES

But they were the minority, and the speaker shouted them down. In his view, women could do no wrong, and you no right.

BLEPYRUS

And what did he say?

CHREMES

First, he called you a criminal.

BLEPYRUS

And what did he call you?

CHREMES

I'll get to that. Then he called you a crook.

BLEPYRUS

Only me?

CHREMES

That's right, and an informer too.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

έμε μόνον;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

καὶ νὴ Δία

τωνδὶ τὸ πλῆθος.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

440 τίς δὲ τοῦτ' ἄλλως λέγει;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

γυναῖκα δ’ εἶναι πρᾶγμ’ ἔφη νουβυστικὸν
καὶ χρηματοποιόν. κούτε τάπόρρητ’ ἔφη
ἐκ Θεσμοφόροιν ἐκάστοτ’ αὐτὰς ἐκφέρειν,
σὲ δὲ κάμε βουλεύοντε τοῦτο δρᾶν ἀεί.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

445 καὶ νὴ τὸν Ἐρμῆν τοῦτό γ’ οὐκ ἐψεύσατο.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

ἔπειτα συμβάλλειν πρὸς ἄλλήλας ἔφη
ἰμάτια χρυσῖ ἀργύριον ἐκπώματα
μόνας μόναις, οὐ μαρτύρων ἐναντίον,
καὶ ταῦτ’ ἀποφέρειν πάντα κούκ ἀποστερεῖν,
450 ἡμῶν δὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἔφασκε τοῦτο δρᾶν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

451 νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ μαρτύρων γ’ ἐναντίον.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

454 ἔτερά τε πλεῖστα τὰς γυναῖκας ηὐλόγει·
452 οὐ συκοφαντεῖν, οὐ διώκειν, οὐδὲ τὸν
453 δῆμον καταλύειν, ἄλλα πολλὰ κάγαθά.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

Only me?

CHREMES

That's right, you and most of this crowd here as well!

BLEPYRUS

Well, who'd deny that?

CHREMES

He went on to say that a woman is a creature bursting with brains, and a moneymaker, and that women never divulge the secrets of the Thesmophoria, by contrast with you and me, who leak what we say in Council all the time.

BLEPYRUS

By Hermes, that last point's no lie.

CHREMES

Then he said that women lend each other dresses, jewelry, money, drinking cups, privately and without witnesses, and always return everything and don't cheat, as most of us men, he claimed, do.

BLEPYRUS

By Poseidon, we cheat even when there *are* witnesses.

CHREMES

And he went on at great length in praise of the women, that they don't inform on people, don't sue them, don't try to overthrow the democracy, and lots of other virtues.

⁴⁵⁴ transp. Bachmann

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τί δῆτ' ἔδοξεν;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

455

ἐπιτρέπειν γε τὴν πόλιν
ταύταις ἐδόκει γὰρ τοῦτο μόνον ἐν τῇ πόλει
οὐπω γεγενῆσθαι.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

καὶ δέδοκται;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

φήμ' ἐγώ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἄπαντά τ' αὐταῖς ἐστι προστεταγμένα
ἄ τοισιν ἀστοῖς ἔμελεν;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

οὗτω ταῦτ' ἔχει.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

460 οὐδὲ εἰς δικαστήριον ἄρ' εἶμ', ἀλλ' ἡ γυνή;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

οὐδὲ ἔτι σὺ θρέψεις οὖς ἔχεις, ἀλλ' ἡ γυνή.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ στένειν τὸν ὄρθρον ἔτι πρᾶγμ' ἄρα μοι;

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ ταῖς γυναιξὶ ταῦτ' ἥδη μέλει.
σὺ δ' ἀστενακτὶ περδόμενος οἴκοι μενεῖς.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

And what was voted?

CHREMES

To turn the city over to them. That seemed to be the only thing that hasn't been tried.

BLEPYRUS

And this passed?

CHREMES

That's what I'm telling you.

BLEPYRUS

And they've been put in charge of everything that used to be the business of the citizens?

CHREMES

That's the way it is.

BLEPYRUS

So I won't be going to court anymore, my wife will?

CHREMES

And you won't be caring for your dependents anymore, your wife will.

BLEPYRUS

And I'll have no more need to groan myself awake at dawn?

CHREMES

God no, all that's the women's concern now; you can stop groaning and stay at home farting all day.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

465 ἐκεῖνο δεινὸν τοῖσιν ἡλίκουσιν νῷν,
μὴ παραλαβοῦσαι τῆς πόλεως τὰς ἥνιας
ἔπειτ' ἀναγκάζωσι πρὸς βίαν—

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

τί δρᾶν;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κινεῖν ἔαυτάς. ἦν δὲ μὴ δυνώμεθα,
ἀριστον οὐ δώσοντο.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

σὺ δέ γε νὴ Δία

470 δρᾶ ταῦθ', ἵν' ἀριστᾶς τε καὶ κινῆς ἄμα.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ πρὸς βίαν δεινότατον.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

ἀλλ' εἰ τῇ πόλει
τοῦτο ξυνδίσει, ταῦτα χρὴ πάντ' ἄνδρα δρᾶν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

λόγος γέ τοί τις ἔστι τῶν γεραιτέρων,
ὅσ' ἀν ἀνόητ' ἢ μῶρα βουλευσώμεθα,
475 ἀπαντ' ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ἡμῖν ξυμφέρειν.

ΧΡΕΜΗΣ

καὶ ξυμφέροι γ', ὁ πότνια Παλλὰς καὶ θεοί.
ἀλλ' εἶμι· σὺ δ' ὑγίαινε.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

καὶ σύ γ', ὁ Χρέμης.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

But there lies the danger for men our age: once they've taken the reins of power they'll force us against our will to—

CHREMES

To what?

BLEPYRUS

To screw them! And if we can't perform, they won't make us breakfast.

CHREMES

By god, you'd better do *this* then,⁴⁵ so you can eat breakfast and screw at the same time.

BLEPYRUS

But it's absolutely terrible when you're forced!

CHREMES

But if this is state policy, every true man's got to do his part.

BLEPYRUS

Well, there *is* an ancestral saying, that however brainless or foolish our policies, all our affairs will turn out for the best.

CHREMES

And I hope they do turn out for the best, Lady Pallas and all you gods. Well, I must be off. Be well, friend.

BLEPYRUS

You too, Chremes.

Exit *CHREMES* *offstage*, *BLEPYRUS* *into his house*.

⁴⁵ The gesture and its significance are obscure.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

ἔμβα χώρει.

ἄρ' ἔστι τῶν ἀνδρῶν τις ἡμῖν ὅστις ἐπακολουθεῖ;
 480 στρέφου, σκόπει,
 φύλαττε σαυτὴν ἀσφαλῶς, πολλοὶ γὰρ οἱ
 πανοῦργοι,
 μή πού τις ἐκ τοῦ πισθεν ὥν τὸ σχῆμα καταφυλάξῃ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) ἀλλ' ὡς μάλιστα τοῦν ποδοῖν ἐπικτυπῶν βάδιζε.
 ἡμῖν δ' ἀν αἰσχύνην φέροι
 485 πάσαισι παρὰ τοῖς ἀνδράσιν
 τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτ' ἐλεγχθέν.
 πρὸς ταῦτα συστέλλον σεαν-
 τὴν καὶ περισκοπουμένη
 <ἄθρει κύκλω> κάκεῖσε καὶ
 488a τάκ δεξιᾶς, μὴ ξυμφορὰ
 488b γενήσεται τὸ πρᾶγμα.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

ἀλλ' ἐγκονῶμεν τοῦ τόπου γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐσμεν ἦδη,
 490 ὅθενπερ εἰς ἐκκλησίαν ὠρμώμεθ' ἡνίκ' ἥμεν.
 τὴν δ' οἰκίαν ἔξεσθ' ὁρᾶν, ὅθενπερ ἡ στρατηγὸς
 ἔσθ' ἡ τὸ πρᾶγμ' εὐροῦσ' ὁ νῦν ἔδοξε τοῖς πολίταις.

⁴⁸⁷ suppl. Ussher

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

Enter CHORUS.

CHORUS LEADER

Forward march!
Are any of the men following us?
Turn around, take a look,
watch yourselves carefully: there are lots of no-good
men about,
and one of them might be at our rear, inspecting our
deportment.

CHORUS

Right! As you march along stomp your feet as loud as
you can.
We would be in disgrace
before all our husbands
if this business were exposed.
And so stay closely wrapped,
and look all around you
watching this way and that,
both left and right, lest catastrophe
befall our operation.

CHORUS LEADER

Now let's make the dust fly: we're already near the
place
where we first set forth for Assembly.
We can see the house now where our commander
lives,
who thought up the plan that the citizens have now
enacted.

ARISTOPHANES

ХОРОС

(ἀντ) ὡστ' εἰκὸς ἡμᾶς μὴ βραδύνειν ἔστ' ἐπαναμενούσας
πώγωνας ἔξηρτημένας,
495a μὴ καὶ τις ὄψεθ' ἡμέρας
495b χῆμῶν ἵσως κατείπῃ.
ἀλλ' εἴα δεῦρ' ἐπὶ σκιᾶς
ἔλθοῦσα πρὸς τὸ τειχίον,
παραβλέπουσα θατέρω,
499a πάλιν μετασκεύαζε σαν-
499b τὴν αὖθις ἥπερ ἥσθα.

КОРТФАИА

500 καὶ μὴ βράδυν· ὡς τήνδε καὶ δὴ τὴν στρατηγὸν
ἡμῶν
χωροῦσαν ἔξ ἐκκλησίας ὅρῳμεν. ἀλλ' ἐπείγουν
ἄπασα καὶ μίσει σάκον πρὸς ταῦν γνάθοιν ἔχουσα·
καῦται γὰρ ἄκουσαι πάλαι τὸ σχῆμα τοῦτ' ἔχουσιν.

ПРАΞАГОРА

ταυτὶ μὲν ἡμῖν, ὃ γυναικες, εὐτυχῶς
505 τὰ πράγματ' ἐκβέβηκεν ἀβουλεύσαμεν.
ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα, πρίν τιν' ἀνθρώπων ἰδεῖν,
ρίπτεῖτε χλαίνας, ἐμβὰς ἐκποδὼν ἵτω,
χάλα συναπτοὺς ἡνίας Λακωνικάς,
βακτηρίας ἀφεσθε. καὶ μέντοι σὺ μὲν
510 ταύτας κατευτρέπιζ, ἐγὼ δὲ βούλομαι,

495 ὄψεθ' ἡμέρας von Blumenthal: ὄψετ' ἡμᾶς R A: ὄψαιτο
ἡμᾶς Γ 503 καῦται van Leeuwen: χαῦται a ἄκουσαι . . .
ἔχουσιν Agar: ἥκουσιν . . . ἔχουσαι a

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

CHORUS

So we've no further need to waste time and hang
around

with these beards hanging off us;
someone might see us in the daylight
and maybe turn us in.

So come this way, into the shade
by the house wall,
keeping an eye peeled,
and change yourselves
back to the way you were.

CHORUS LEADER

And don't dally, for here we can see our commander
making her way from Assembly. Now get a move on
everyone, and lose those hateful hairbags on your
cheeks,

which have grudgingly worn this gear a long time
now.

Enter PRAXAGORA.

PRAXAGORA

We're in luck, ladies: this business has turned out as we
planned. Now before anybody sees you, get rid of those
cloaks as quick as you can; shoes out from underfoot; you,
undo the knotted Spartan reins;⁴⁶ toss away the walking
sticks. (*to Chorus Leader*) And you, get these women into
some kind of order. I'd like to sneak back into the house

⁴⁶ I.e. the laces of Spartan boots, cf. 74.

ARISTOPHANES

εἴσω παρερπύσασα πρὶν τὸν ἄνδρα με
ἰδεῖν, καταθέσθαι θοιμάτιον αὐτοῦ πάλιν
δθευπερ ἔλαβον, τἄλλα θ' ἀξηνεγκάμην.

КОРТФАИА

<διά>κειται δὴ πάνθ' ἅπερ εἶπας, σὸν δ' ἔργον
τἄλλα διδάσκειν,
515 δ τί σοι δρῶσαι ξύμφορον ἡμεῖς δόξομεν ὄρθως
ὑπακούειν.
οὐδεμιὰ γὰρ δεινοτέρᾳ σου ξυμμείξασ' οἶδα
γυναικί.

ПРАΞΑГОРА

περιμείνατέ νυν, ἵνα τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἦν ἄρτι
κεχειροτόνημαι,
ξυμβούλοισιν πάσαις ὑμῖν χρήσωμαι. καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖ
μοι
ἐν τῷ θορύβῳ καὶ τοῖς δεινοῖς ἀνδρειόταται
γεγένησθε.

ВЛЕПТРОС

αὕτη, πόθεν ἥκεις, Πραξαγόρα;

ПРАΞАГОРА

520 τί δ', ω μέλε,
σοὶ τοῦθ';

ВЛЕПТРОС

ὅ τι μοι τοῦτ' ἔστιν; ως εὐηθικῶς.

ПРАΞАГОРА

οὗτοι παρά τον μοιχοῦ γε φήσεις.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

before my husband sees me and put his cloak back where I got it, and all this other stuff I borrowed.

CHORUS LEADER

Everything's disposed just as you ordered. Now it's up to you to continue our training: by what useful service will we pass muster in your eyes? For I know that I've never encountered a woman more impressive than you.

PRAXAGORA

Then stick around: I'll use all of you as counsellors in running the office I've been elected to, because back there, amid the hubbub and danger, you proved very manly!

Enter BLEPYRUS from his house.

BLEPYRUS

It's you! Where have you been, Praxagora?

PRAXAGORA

Is that any of your business, sir?

BLEPYRUS

Any of my business? What innocence!

PRAXAGORA

Now don't start saying I've been at some lover's house.

⁵¹⁴ suppl. D'Angour in *BMCR* 11.17 2000

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἵσως

ένός γε.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ μὴν βασανίσαι τουτί γέ σοι
ἔξεστι.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

πῶς;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

εἰ τῆς κεφαλῆς ὅζω μύρου.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

525 τί δ'; οὐχὶ βινεῖται γυνὴ κάνεν μύρου;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οὐ δὴ τάλαιν' ἔγωγε.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

πῶς οὖν ὅρθριον
ῳχον σιωπῇ θοιμάτιον λαβοῦντά μου;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

γυνὴ μέ τις νύκτωρ ἐταίρα καὶ φίλη
μετεπέμψατ' ὡδίνουσα.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κἄτ' οὐκ ἦν ἐμοὶ
φράσασαν ἴέναι;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

530 τῆς λεχοῦς δ' οὐ φροντίσαι
οὔτως ἔχούσης, ὥνερ;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

Maybe more than one!

PRAXAGORA

Very well, you can check it out.

BLEPYRUS

How?

PRAXAGORA

See if you can smell perfume on my head.

BLEPYRUS

What? Can't a woman get fucked even without perfume?

PRAXAGORA

Not I, more's the pity.

BLEPYRUS

Then why did you leave the house so early, without telling me, and taking my cloak with you?

PRAXAGORA

A woman I know, a dear friend, was in labor and asked me to attend her.

BLEPYRUS

So couldn't you have told me you were leaving?

PRAXAGORA

And not give a thought, husband, to a woman brought to bed in her condition?

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

εἰποῦσάν γ' ἐμοί.

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἐνταῦθά τι κακόν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὰ τῷ θεῷ

ἀλλ' ὁσπερ εἶχον ωχόμην· ἐδεῖτο δὲ
ἥπερ μεθῆκέ μ' ἔξιέναι πάση τέχνῃ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

535 εἴτ' οὐ τὸ σαυτῆς ἴμάτιον ἐχρῆν σ' ἔχειν;
ἀλλ' ἔμ' ἀποδύσασ', ἐπιβαλοῦσα τούγκυκλον,
ωχον καταλιπούσ' ὁσπερεὶ προκείμενον,
μόνον οὐ στεφανώσασ' οὐδὲ ἐπιθεῖσα λήκυθον.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ψῦχος γὰρ ἦν, ἐγὼ δὲ λεπτὴ κάσθευής·
540 ἔπειθ' ἵν' ἀλεαίνοιμι, τοῦτ' ἡμπεσχόμην.
σὲ δ' ἐν ἀλέᾳ κατακείμενον καὶ στρώμασιν
κατέλιπον, ὅνερ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

αἱ δὲ δὴ Λακωνικαὶ
ωχοντο μετὰ σοῦ κατὰ τί χὴ βακτηρία;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἵνα θοίμάτιον σώσαιμι, μεθυπεδησάμην
545 μιμουμένη σε καὶ κτυποῦσα τοῦν ποδοῖν
καὶ τοὺς λίθους παίονσα τῇ βακτηρίᾳ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οἶσθ' οὖν ἀπολωλεκύνα πυρῶν ἑκτέα,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

Yes, but after telling me. There's something fishy here.

PRAXAGORA

Not at all, by the Two Goddesses. I went just as I was. The maid who came asked me to leave right away.

BLEPYRUS

Then shouldn't you have worn your own slip? Instead, you swiped my cloak and threw your slip over me, leaving me there like a corpse at the undertaker's; you all but laid me out with a wreath and urn!

PRAXAGORA

It was cold outside, and I'm thin and delicate, so I put this on to keep warm. And I left you lying snugly blanketed, husband.

BLEPYRUS

And why did my Spartan boots go with you, and my walking stick?

PRAXAGORA

I didn't want your cloak to get stolen, so I put these on to sound like you, stomping my feet and poking at stones with the stick.

BLEPYRUS

Do you realize that you've cost us eight quarts of wheat,

ARISTOPHANES

δν χρῆν ἔμ' ἔξ ἐκκλησίας εἰληφέναι;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὴ φροντίσῃς· ἄρρεν γὰρ ἔτεκε παιδίον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἡκκλησία;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

550 μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἦν ἐγὼχόμην.
ἄταρ γεγένηται;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ναὶ μὰ Δῖ. οὐκ ἥδησθά με
φράσαντά σοι χθές;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἄρτι γ' ἀναμιμήσκομαι.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδ' ἄρα τὰ δόξαντ' οἶσθα;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὰ Δῖ ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κάθησο τοίνυν σηπίας μασωμένη.

555 νῦν δέ φασι παραδεδόσθαι τὴν πόλιν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τί δρᾶν; ὑφαίνειν;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐ μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ' ἀρχειν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

what I'd have gotten by attending Assembly?

PRAXAGORA

Don't worry, she had a boy.⁴⁷

BLEPYRUS

Who, the Assembly?

PRAXAGORA

No no, the woman I attended. So, an Assembly was held?

BLEPYRUS

God yes. Don't you remember my telling you about it yesterday?

PRAXAGORA

Yes, now I remember.

BLEPYRUS

So you don't even know what was decided?

PRAXAGORA

I sure don't.

BLEPYRUS

Well, sit down and chew some cuttlefish: they say the city's been turned over to you women.

PRAXAGORA

For what job? Some sewing?

BLEPYRUS

God no, for governing!

⁴⁷ In which case Praxagora, as midwife, could expect to receive a gift worth more than the 3-obol Assembly payment.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τίνων;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἀπαξαπάντων τῶν κατὰ πόλιν πραγμάτων.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην μακαρία γ' ἄρ' ή πόλις
ἔσται τὸ λοιπόν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κατὰ τί;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

πολλῶν οὖνεκα.

560 οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῖς τολμῶσιν αὐτὴν αἰσχρὰ δρᾶν
ἔσται τὸ λοιπὸν οὐδάμ', οὐδὲ μαρτυρεῖν,
οὐ συκοφαντεῖν—

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

μηδαμῶς πρὸς τῶν θεῶν
τουτὶ ποιήσης μηδ' ἀφέλη μου τὸν βίον.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ὦ δαιμόνι ἀνδρῶν, τὴν γυναικ' ἔα λέγειν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

565 μὴ λωποδυτῆσαι, μὴ φθονεῖν τοῖς πλησίον,
μὴ γυμνὸν εἶναι μὴ πένητα μηδένα,
μὴ λοιδορεῖσθαι, μὴ νεχυραζόμενον φέρειν.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ μεγάλα γ', εἰ μὴ ψεύσεται.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

Governing whom?

BLEPYRUS

Absolutely all the city's affairs.

PRAXAGORA

Then, by Aphrodite, the city has a rosy future in store!

BLEPYRUS

How do you figure?

PRAXAGORA

For lots of reasons. You see, from now on aggressive people will be in no position to treat the city shamefully in any way, or to testify or trump up charges—

BLEPYRUS

Good heavens, don't do that, don't take away my livelihood!

NEIGHBOR has come out of his house to listen.

NEIGHBOR

Please, friend, let your wife talk.

PRAXAGORA

—no more mugging, no more envying the next guy, no more wearing rags, no more poor people, no more wrangling, no more dunning and repossessing.

NEIGHBOR

That would be great, by Poseidon, if she's not just making it up.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ' ἀποφανῶ τοῦθ', ὥστε σέ τέ μοι μαρτυρεῖν
570 καὶ τοῦτον αὐτὸν μηδὲν ἀντειπεῖν ἐμοί.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ιῦν δὴ δεῖ σε πυκνὴν φρένα
καὶ φιλόσοφον ἐγείρειν
φροντίδ' ἐπισταμένην
ταῖσι φίλαισιν ἀμύνειν.
κοινῇ γάρ ἐπ' εὐτυχίαισιν
ἔρχεται γλώττης ἐπίνοια πολίτην

575 δῆμον ἐπαγλαϊοῦσα
576a μυρίαισιν ὡφελίαισι βίου·
576b δηλοῦν δ' ὅ τι περ δύναται καιρός.
δεῖται γάρ τι σοφοῦ τινος ἔξ-

ευρήματος ἢ πόλις ἡμῶν.

ἀλλὰ πέραινε μόνον
μήτε δεδραμένα μήτ'
εἰρημένα πω πρότερον.

μισθῶσι γάρ ἦν τὰ παλαιὰ
580 πολλάκις θεῶνται.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

ἀλλ' οὐ μέλλειν, ἀλλ' ἄπτεσθαι καὶ δὴ χρὴ τῆς
διαινοίας,
ώς τὸ ταχύνειν χαρίτων μετέχει πλεῖστον παρὰ
τοῖσι θεαταῖς.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

Let me explain it; you'll have to side with me, and even my
mister here will have no rebuttal to *me*.

CHORUS

Now you must summon up
a shrewd intelligence
and a philosophic mind
that knows how to fight for your comrades.
For it's to the prosperity of all alike
that from your lips comes a bright idea
to gladden the lives of the city's people
with countless benefits;
now's the time to reveal its potential.
Yes, our city needs
some kind of sage scheme;
describe it in full, making sure only
that none of it's ever been
said or done before:
they hate to watch the same old stuff
over and over again!

CHORUS LEADER

No more delay! Here and now you must put your idea in
play: what spectators most appreciate is speed.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ μὴν ὅτι μὲν χρηστὰ διδάξω πιστεύω· τοὺς δὲ
θεατάς,
 εἰ καινοτομεῖν ἐθελήσουσιν καὶ μὴ τοῖς ἡθάσι λίαν
 585 τοῖς τ' ἀρχαίοις ἐνδιατρίβειν, τοῦτ' ἔσθ' ὁ μάλιστα
 δέδοικα.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

περὶ μὲν τοίνυν τοῦ καινοτομεῖν μὴ δείσης· τοῦτο
 γὰρ ἡμῖν
 δρᾶν ἀντ' ἄλλης ἀρχῆς ἔστιν, τῶν δ' ἀρχαίων
 ἀμελῆσαι.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μή νυν πρότερον μηδεὶς ὑμῶν ἀντείπῃ μηδὲ
 ὑποκρούσῃ,
 πρὸν ἐπίστασθαι τὴν ἐπίνοιαν καὶ τοῦ φράζοντος
 ἀκοῦσαι.
 590 κοινωνεῖν γὰρ πάντας φήσω χρῆναι πάντων
μετέχοντας
 κάκ ταῦτοῦ ζῆν, καὶ μὴ τὸν μὲν πλουτεῖν, τὸν δ'
 ἀθλιον εἶναι,
 μηδὲ γεωργεῖν τὸν μὲν πολλήν, τῷ δ' εἶναι μηδὲ
 ταφῆναι,
 μηδὲ ἀνδραπόδοις τὸν μὲν χρῆσθαι πολλοῖς, τὸν δ'
 οὐδὲ ἀκολούθῳ.
 ἀλλ' ἔνα ποιῶ κοινὸν πᾶσιν βίοτον, καὶ τοῦτον
ὅμοιον.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

Well, I'm sure my proposals are worthwhile, but I'm awfully worried about the spectators: are they ready to quarry a new vein and not stick with what's hoary and conventional?

NEIGHBOR

Don't worry about quarrying new veins: for us, indifference to precedent takes precedence over any other principle of government.

PRAXAGORA

Then let no one object or interrupt until you've heard the speaker out and understand the plan. Very well: I propose that everyone should own everything in common, and draw an equal living. No more rich man here, poor man there, or a man with a big farm and a man without land enough for his own grave, or a man with many slaves and a man without even an attendant. No, I will establish one and the same standard of life for everyone.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

πῶς οὖν ἔσται κοινὸς ἄπασιν;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

595 κατέδει πέλεθον πρότερός μου.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

καὶ τῶν πελέθων κοινωνοῦμεν;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ᾽ ἔφθης μὲν ὑποκρούσας·
τοῦτο γὰρ ἡμελλον ἐγὼ λέξειν. τὴν γῆν πρώτιστα
ποιήσω
κοινὴν πάντων καὶ τάργυριον καὶ τἄλλον ὅποστ' ἔστιν
ἐκάστῳ.

600 ταμιευόμεναι καὶ φειδόμεναι καὶ τὴν γνώμην
προσέχονται.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πῶς οὖν ὁστις μὴ κέκτηται γῆν ἡμῶν, ἀργύριον δὲ
καὶ Δαρεικούς, ἀφανῆ πλοῦτον;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τοῦτ' ἐσ τὸ μέσον καταθήσει.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴ καταθεῖσι ψευδορκήσει· κάκτησατο γὰρ διὰ
τοῦτο.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ᾽ οὐδέν τοι χρήσιμον ἔσται πάντως αὐτῷ.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

How will it be the same for everyone?

PRAXAGORA

If we were eating dung you'd want the first bite!

BLEPYRUS

We'll be sharing the dung too?

PRAXAGORA

God no, I mean you cut me off by interrupting; I was just about to explain that point. My first act will be to communize all the land, money, and other property that's now individually owned. We women will manage this common fund with thrift and good judgment, and take good care of you.

NEIGHBOR

And what about the man who owns no land but has invisible wealth, like silver coin and gold darics?⁴⁸

PRAXAGORA

He'll contribute it to the common fund.

BLEPYRUS

And if he doesn't, he'll perjure himself; after all, that's how he got it in the first place!

PRAXAGORA

But see, it won't be of any use to him anyway.

⁴⁸ A widely circulated Persian coin worth 20 drachmas.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

κατὰ δὴ τί;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν πενίᾳ δράσει πάντα γὰρ ἔξουσιν
ἀπαντεῖ,
ἄρτους, τεμάχη, μάζας, χλαιίνας, οἶνον, στεφάνους,
ἐρεβίνθους.
ώστε τί κέρδος μὴ καταθεῖναι; σὺ γὰρ ἔξευρὼν
ἀπόδειξον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οῦκον καὶ νῦν οὗτοι μᾶλλον κλέπτουσ' οἷς ταῦτα
πάρεστιν;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πρότερόν γ', ὥταῖρ', ὅτε τοῖσι νόμοις διεχρώμεθα
τοῖς προτέροισιν.
νῦν δ', ἔσται γὰρ βίος ἐκ κοινοῦ, τί τὸ κέρδος μὴ
καταθεῖναι;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἢν μείρακ' ἴδων ἐπιθυμήσῃ καὶ βούληται
σκαλαθῆραι,
ἔξει τούτων ἀφελῶν δοῦναι, τῶν ἐκ κοινοῦ δὲ
μεθέξει
ξυγκαταδαρθών.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ' ἔξέσται προΐκ' αὐτῷ ξυγκαταδαρθεῖν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

What do you mean?

PRAXAGORA

No one will be doing *anything* as a result of poverty, because everyone will have all the necessities: bread, salt fish, barley cakes, cloaks, wine, garlands, chickpeas. So where's his profit in not contributing? If you can find it, do tell me.

BLEPYRUS

But even now, aren't the people who have all this the bigger thieves?

NEIGHBOR

That was before, my friend, when we lived under the previous system. But now that everyone will be living from a common fund, where's his profit in not contributing?

BLEPYRUS

If he spots a girl and fancies her and wants a poke, he'll be able to take her price from this common fund and have all that's commonly wanted, when he's slept with her.

PRAXAGORA

No, he'll be able to sleep with her free of charge. I'm mak-

ARISTOPHANES

καὶ ταύτας γὰρ κοινὰς ποιῶ τοῖς ἀνδράσι
συγκατακεῖσθαι
καὶ παιδοποιεῖν τῷ βουλομένῳ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

615 πῶς οὖν οὐ πάντες ἵασιν
ἐπὶ τὴν ὡραιοτάτην αὐτῶν καὶ ζητήσουσιν ἐρεύδειν;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

αἱ φαυλότεραι καὶ σιμότεραι παρὰ τὰς σεμνὰς
καθεδοῦνται.
κἄτ' ἦν ταύτης ἐπιθυμήσῃ, τὴν αἰσχρὰν πρῶθ’
ὑποκρούσει.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

καὶ πῶς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πρεσβύτας, ἦν ταῖς αἰσχραῖσι
συνωμεν,
620 οὐκ ἐπιλείψει τὸ πέος πρότερον πρὶν ἔκεισ’ οἱ φῆς
ἀφικέσθαι;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οὐχὶ μαχοῦνται περὶ σοῦ θάρρει, μὴ δείσης· οὐχὶ
μαχοῦνται.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

περὶ τοῦ;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τοῦ μὴ ξυγκαταδαρθεῖν. καὶ σοὶ τοιοῦτον
ὑπάρχει.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

ing these girls common property too, for the men to sleep with and make babies with as they please.

BLEPYRUS

Then won't everyone head for the prettiest girl and try to bang her?

PRAXAGORA

The homely and bob-nosed women will sit right beside the classy ones, and if a man wants the latter he'll have to ball the ugly one first.

BLEPYRUS

But what about us older men? If we go with the ugly ones first, our cocks won't have anything left when we get where you said.

PRAXAGORA

They won't fight about you, don't worry. Never fear, they won't fight.

BLEPYRUS

Fight about what?

PRAXAGORA

About not getting to sleep with you! Anyway, you've got that problem as it is.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ μὲν ὑμέτερον γνώμην τιν' ἔχει προβεβούλευται
γὰρ ὅπως ἀν
μηδεμιᾶς ἥ τρύπημα κενόν· τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τί¹
ποιήσει;

625 φεύξονται γὰρ τοὺς αἰσχίους, ἐπὶ τοὺς δὲ καλοὺς
βαδιοῦνται.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλὰ φυλάξουσ' οἱ φαυλότεροι τοὺς καλλίους
ἀπιόντας
ἀπὸ τοῦ δείπνου καὶ τηρήσουσ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν
δημοσίοισιν.
κοῦκ ἔξεσται παρὰ τοῖσι καλοῖς <καὶ τοῖς
μεγάλοις> καταδαρθεῖν
ταῖσι γυναιξὶν πρὶν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς καὶ τοῖς μικροῖς
χαρίσωνται.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

630 ἡ Λυσικράτους ἄρα νυνὶ ρὶς ἵσα τοῖσι καλοῖσι
φρονήσει;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλω· καὶ δημοτική γ' ἡ γνώμη καὶ
καταχήνη
τῶν σεμινοτέρων ἔσται πολλὴ καὶ τῶν σφραγίδας
ἔχόντων,
ὅταν ἐμβάδ' ἔχων εἴπῃ πρότερος, “παραχώρει κἄτ'
ἐπιτήρει,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

Your side of the equation makes a certain sense; you've planned it that no woman's hole will go unplugged. But what do you mean to do for the men's side? Because the women will shun the ugly men and go for the handsome ones.

PRAXAGORA

Well, the homely men will tail the handsomer ones as they leave their dinner parties, and keep an eye on them in the public places, for it won't be lawful for handsome and tall men to sleep with any women who haven't first accommodated the uglies and the runts.

BLEPYRUS

So now Lysicrates'⁴⁹ nose will be up there with the beautiful people's!

NEIGHBOR

Absolutely. What's more, it's an idea that favors ordinary people, and it'll be a great joke on the big shots with signet rings when a guy wearing clogs speaks up and says, "Step

⁴⁹ Unidentifiable.

628 *οἱ φαυλότεροι* ante *κοὐκ* R Λ (v. om. Γ) del. et suppl.
Tyrwhitt

ARISTOPHANES

ὅταν ἥδη γὰρ διαπραξάμενος παραδῶ σοι
δευτεριάζειν."

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

635 πῶς οὖν οὕτω ζώντων ἡμῶν τοὺς αὐτοῦ παῖδας
ἔκαστος
ἔσται δυνατὸς διαγιγνώσκειν;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τί δὲ δεῖ; πατέρας γὰρ ἀπαντας
τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους αὐτῶν εἶναι τοῖσι χρόνοισιν
νομιοῦσιν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὔκουν ἄγξουσ' εὖ καὶ χρηστῶς ἔξῆς πάντ' ἄνδρα
γέροντα
διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν; ἐπεὶ καὶ νῦν γιγνώσκοντες πατέρ
όντα
640 ἄγχουσι· τί δῆθ' ὅταν ἀγνὼς ἦ; πῶς οὐ τότε
κἀπιχεσούνται;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ' ὁ παρεστὼς οὐκ ἐπιτρέψει· τότε δ' αὐτοῖς οὐκ
ἔμελ' οὐδὲν
τῶν ἀλλοτρίων, ὅστις τύπτοι, νῦν δ' ἦν πληγέντος
ἀκούσῃ,
μὴ αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον τύπτει δεδιὼς τοῖς δρῶσιν τοῦτο
μαχεῖται.

638 πάντ' ἄνδρα van Leeuwen: τὸν πάντα a

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

aside and wait till I'm finished; then I'll give you seconds!"

BLEPYRUS

Well, if we live this way, how will any man be able to recognize his own children?⁵⁰

PRAXAGORA

Why should he? They'll regard all older men of a certain age to be their fathers.

BLEPYRUS

Then from now on won't sons methodically strangle each and every older man? Because even now they strangle their acknowledged father; what will happen when he's unacknowledged? Won't they'll shit on him as well?

PRAXAGORA

No, the bystanders won't allow it. They didn't used to care who was beating other people's fathers, but now if they hear a man getting beaten they'll worry that the victim is their own dad, and fight the attackers.

⁵⁰ Compare Plato, *Republic* 460–65.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὰ μὲν ἄλλα λέγεις οὐδὲν σκαιῶς· εἰ δὲ προσελθὼν
Ἐπίκουρος
645 ἦ Λευκόλοφος “πάππαν” με καλεῖ, τοῦτ’ ἥδη δεινὸν
ἀκοῦσαι.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πολὺ μέντοι δεινότερον τούτου τοῦ πράγματός
ἐστι—

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ ποῖον;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

εἴ σε φιλήσειεν Ἀρίστυλλος φάσκων αὐτοῦ πατέρ'
εἶναι.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οἱμώζοι γ' ἀν καὶ κωκύοι.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

σὺ δέ γ' ὅζοις ἀν καλαμίνθης.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἄλλ' οὗτος μὲν πρότερον γέγονεν πρὶν τὸ ψήφισμα
γενέσθαι,
ῶστ' οὐχὶ δέος μή σε φιλήσῃ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

650 δεινὸν μένταν ἐπεπόνθειν.
τὴν γῆν δὲ τίς ἔσθ' ὁ γεωργῆσων;

650 -θη (-θην Λ) Bentley

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

There's nothing wrong with your analysis, but if Epicurus⁵¹ or Leucolophus⁵² start hanging around and calling me "daddy," it's going to be frightful to listen to.

NEIGHBOR

Well, I can think of something a lot more frightful.

BLEPYRUS

Such as?

NEIGHBOR

If Aristyllus⁵³ claims you're his father and kisses you!

BLEPYRUS

If he does he'll sorely regret it!

NEIGHBOR

And you'd smell of *eau d'ordure*!

PRAXAGORA

But he was born before our decree, so there's no need to worry that he'll kiss you.

BLEPYRUS

He'd still have been sorry if he did. But who will there be to farm the land?

⁵¹ Unidentifiable.

⁵² Presumably Leucolophides, the son of Adeimantus of Scambonidae, considered a traitor at Aegospotami and prosecuted in 393 (*Dem.* 19.191); cf. *Frogs* 1512 n.

⁵³ Apparently a coprophiliac, cf. *Wealth* 313–14, fr. 551.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οἱ δοῦλοι. σοὶ δὲ μελήσει,
ὅταν ἦ δεκάπουν τὸ στοιχεῖον, λιπαρῷ χωρεῖν ἐπὶ¹
δεῖπνον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

περὶ δ' ἱματίων τίς πόρος ἔσται; καὶ γὰρ τοῦτ'
ἔστιν ἐρέσθαι.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τὰ μὲν ὅνθ' ὑμῖν πρῶτον ὑπάρξει, τὰ δὲ λοίφ' ἡμεῖς
ὑφανοῦμεν.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

655 ἐν ἔτι ζητῷ· πῶς ἦν τις ὄφλῃ παρὰ τοῖς ἄρχουσι
δίκην τῷ;
πόθεν ἐκτείσει ταύτην; οὐ γὰρ τῶν κοινῶν γ' ἔστι
δίκαιον.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ δίκαιη πρῶτον ἔσονται.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τοῦπος σ' ἐπιτρύψει.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

κάγῳ ταύτην γνώμην ἐθέμην.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τοῦ γὰρ τάλαν οὕνεκ' ἔσονται;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

πολλῶν οὕνεκα, νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλων πρῶτον δ' ἐνὸς
οὕνεκα δήπου,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

The slaves. Your only concern will be to get slicked up and head for dinner when the shadow stick's at ten feet.

BLEPYRUS

Then about overcoats, who will supply them? It's a reasonable question.

PRAXAGORA

Your current supply will do for now; later we'll weave you new ones.

BLEPYRUS

One more question: what happens if someone loses a lawsuit to somebody before the archons? How will he pay the judgment? It wouldn't be fair to take that from the common pool.

PRAXAGORA

But there won't be any lawsuits in the first place.

BLEPYRUS

That statement will be your undoing.

NEIGHBOR

That's my verdict too.

PRAXAGORA

But what, poor dear, will they sue over?

BLEPYRUS

My god, lots of things. Foremost, of course, is when a

ARISTOPHANES

ἢν τις ὁφείλων ἔξαρνῆται.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

660 πόθεν οὖν ἐδάνειστο ὁ δανείσας,
ἐν τῷ κοινῷ πάντων ὅντων; κλέπτων δήπου στό^τ
ἐπίδηλος.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

νὴ τὴν Δήμητρ', εὖ γε διδάσκεις.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τούτῳ τοίνυν φρασάτω μοι,
τῆς αἰκείας οἱ τύπτοντες πόθεν ἐκτείσουσιν, ἐπειδὰν
εὐωχηθέντες ὑβρίζωσιν; τοῦτο γὰρ οἴμαι σ'
ἀπορήσειν.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

665 ἀπὸ τῆς μάζης ἡστοι σιτεῖται· ταύτης γὰρ ὅταν τις
ἀφαιρῇ,
οὐχ ὑβριεῖται φαύλως οὕτως αὐθίς τῇ γαστρὶ^τ
κολασθείσ.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδὲν αὖ κλέπτης οὐδεὶς ἔσται;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

πῶς γὰρ κλέψει μετὸν αὐτῷ;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ ἀποδύσουστος ἄρα τῶν νυκτῶν;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οὐκ ἢν οἶκοι γε καθεύδῃσ.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

debtor refuses to pay.

PRAXAGORA

But where did the creditor get the money to lend, all funds being in common? He's obviously a thief—of course!

NEIGHBOR

By golly, that's right.

BLEPYRUS

But let her answer me this: when people act rowdy after a dinner party and get into fights, how will they pay their fines for assault? That one, I think, will stump you.

PRAXAGORA

He'll pay out of his own bread ration. A decrease there will hit him right in the belly, so he'll think twice before he gets rowdy again.

BLEPYRUS

And will no one be a thief?

PRAXAGORA

Of course not: how can anyone steal what he's got a share in?

BLEPYRUS

So no more muggers at night?

NEIGHBOR

Not if you sleep at home!

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

οὐδέ τὴν γε θύραζ' ὥσπερ πρότερον βίοτος γὰρ
πᾶσιν ὑπάρξει.

670 ήν δ' ἀποδύη γ', αὐτὸς δώσει τί γὰρ αὐτῷ πρᾶγμα
μάχεσθαι;
ἔτερον γὰρ ἵων ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ κρεῖττον ἐκείνου
κομιεῖται.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ κυβεύσοντος' ἀρ' ἄνθρωποι;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

περὶ τοῦ γὰρ τοῦτο ποιήσει;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὴν δὲ δίαιταν τίνα ποιήσεις;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

κοινὴν πᾶσιν. τὸ γὰρ ἄστυ
μίαν οἰκησίν φημι ποιήσειν συρρήξασ' εἰς ἔν
ἄπαντα,
ῶστε βαδίζειν εἰς ἀλλήλων.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

675 τὸ δὲ δεῖπνον ποῦ παραθήσεις;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τὰ δικαστήρια καὶ τὰς στοιάς ἀνδρῶνας πάντα
ποιήσω.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τὸ δὲ βῆμα τί σοι χρήσιμον ἔσται;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

Not even when you go out as you used to, for all will be content with their condition. If someone tries to steal a cloak, the victim will let him have it. Why should he put up a fight? He can go to the common store and get a better one.

BLEPYRUS

And people won't gamble at dice?

PRAXAGORA

What would they use for stakes?

BLEPYRUS

And what standard of living will you establish?

PRAXAGORA

The same for all. I mean to convert the city into one household by breaking down all partitions to make one dwelling, so that everyone can walk into everyone else's space.

BLEPYRUS

And where will you serve dinner?

PRAXAGORA

I'll turn all the courthouses and porticoes into dining rooms.

BLEPYRUS

What will you do with the speakers' platform?

ARISTOPHANES

ПРАΞΑΓΟΡΑ

τὸν κρατῆρας καταθήσω
καὶ τὰς ὑδρίας, καὶ ῥαψῳδεῖν ἔσται τοῖς
παιδαρίοισιν
τὸν ἀνδρείους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ, κεῖ τις δειλὸς
γεγένηται,
ἴνα μὴ δειπνῶσ' αἰσχυνόμενοι.

ΒΑΕΠΤΡΟΣ

680 νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλω χάριέν γε.
τὰ δὲ κληρωτήρια ποι τρέψεις;

ПРАΞΑΓΟΡΑ

εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν καταθήσω,
κἄτα στήσασα παρ' Ἀρμοδίῳ κληρώσω πάντας,
ἔως ἂν
εἰδὼς ὁ λαχὼν ἀπίη χαίρων ἐν ὅποιῳ γράμματι
δειπνεῖ.
καὶ κηρύξει τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ βῆτρ̄ ἐπὶ τὴν στοιάν
ἀκολουθεῖν
τὴν βασίλειον δειπνήσοντας, τὸ δὲ θῆτρ̄ εἰς τὴν
παρὰ ταύτην,
τοὺς δ' ἐκ τοῦ κάππ̄ ἐς τὴν στοιάν χωρεῖν τὴν
ἀλφιτόπωλιν.

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΝ

ἴνα κάπτωσιν;

ПРАΞΑГОРА

μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ' ἵν' ἐκεῖ δειπνῶσιν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PRAXAGORA

I'll use it to store mixing bowls and water jugs, and the children can use it to recite poetry about brave men in battle, or about anyone who was cowardly, so they'll be ashamed to share the meal.

BLEPYRUS

An absolutely charming idea! And what will you do with the ballot boxes?

PRAXAGORA

I'll have them set up in the marketplace by Harmodius' statue⁵⁴ and have everyone draw lots, till each one has got his letter and gone off happily to whatever dining hall it assigns. Thus the Herald will instruct everyone with the letter R to proceed to dinner at the Royal Stoa; the Thetas will go to the one next to it; and the G's to the Grain Market.

BLEPYRUS

G as in guzzle?

PRAXAGORA

No, as in gourmandise.

⁵⁴ Located near the center of the marketplace.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὗτῳ δὲ τὸ γράμμα
μὴ ἔξελκυσθῇ καθ' ὃ δειπνήσει, τούτους ἀπελῶσιν
ἄπαντες;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔσται τοῦτο παρ' ἡμῖν·
690 πᾶσι γὰρ ἄφθονα πάντα παρέξομεν,
ώστε μεθυσθεὶς αὐτῷ στεφάνω
πᾶς τις ἀπεισιν τὴν δῆδα λαβών.
αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες κατὰ τὰς διόδους
προσπίπτουσαι τοῖς ἀπὸ δείπνου
695 τάδε λέξονσιν· “δεῦρο παρ' ἡμᾶς·
ἐνθάδε μεῖράξ ἐσθ' ὥραιά.”
“παρ' ἐμοὶ δ' ἑτέρα,”
φήσει τις ἄνωθ' ἐξ ὑπερώου,
“καὶ καλλίστη καὶ λευκοτάτη·
700 πρότερον μέντοι δεῖ σε καθεύδειν
αὐτῆς παρ' ἐμοί.”
702a τοῖς εὐπρεπέσιν δ' ἀκολουθοῦντες
702b καὶ μειρακίοις οἱ φανλότεροι
τοιάδ' ἐροῦσιν· “ποῖ θεῖς οὖτος;
πάντως οὐδὲν δράσεις ἐλθών.
705 τοῖς γὰρ σιμοῖς καὶ τοῖς αἰσχροῖς
ἔψήφισται προτέροις βινεῖν,
ἡμᾶς δὲ τέως θρῖα λαβόντας
διφόρον συκῆς
ἐν τοῖς προθύροισι δέφεσθαι.”

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

But people who draw no letter for dinner, will everyone push them away from the table?

PRAXAGORA

That won't happen with us; we'll provide everything for everyone unstintingly. Every single man will leave drunk, garland still on and torch in hand, and along the streets as they come from dinner the ladies will accost them like this: "Come here to our place; there's a lovely girl in here." "And over here," another one will cry from a second storey window, "is a very fine and exquisitely pale girl. Of course, you'll have to sleep with me before her." And the inferior men will chase after the handsome lads, saying "Hey you, where do you think you're off to? You're going to get nothing anyway: the law says that the the pug-nosed and the ugly get first fuck, while you grab the petals of your double-hung fig branch and jerk off in the doorway!" So

ARISTOPHANES

φέρε νυν φράσον μοι, ταῦτ' ἀρέσκει σφῶν;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ καὶ ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

710

πάνυ.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

βαδιστέον τἄρ' ἔστιν εἰς ἀγορὰν ἐμοί,
ἴν' ἀποδέχωμαι τὰ πρόσιοντα χρήματα,

λαβούνσα κηρύκαιναν εὐφωνόν τινα.

ἐμὲ γὰρ ἀνάγκη ταῦτα δρᾶν ἥρημένην

715 ἄρχειν, καταστῆσαι τε τὰ ξυστίτια,
ὅπως ἀν εὐωχῆσθε πρώτον τήμερον.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἢδη γὰρ εὐωχησόμεσθα;

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

φήμ' ἐγώ.

ἔπειτα τὰς πόρνας καταπαῦσαι βούλομαι
ἀπαξαπάσας.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἴνα τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

δῆλον τουτογένει.

720 ίνα τῶν νέων ἔχωσιν αὗται τὰς ἀκμάς.

ΠΡΑΞΑΓΟΡΑ

καὶ τάς γε δούλας οὐχὶ δεῖ κοσμουμένας
τὴν τῶν ἐλευθέρων ὑφαρπάζειν Κύπριν,
ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῖς δούλοισι κοιμᾶσθαι μόνον,
κατωνάκην τὸν χοῖρον ἀποτετιλμένας.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

tell me, does my plan meet with your approval?

BLEPYRUS AND NEIGHBOR

Very much so!

PRAXAGORA

Then I'll be going off to the marketplace to receive the goods as they come in, after I pick up a girl with a strong voice to be my herald. These are my duties as the woman elected to office. I must also organize the communal dinners, so you can have your first banquet this very day.

BLEPYRUS

The banquets are to start right away?

PRAXAGORA

That's what I'm telling you. Then I want to put all the prostitutes out of business.

BLEPYRUS

Why?

NEIGHBOR

(indicating *Praxagora and the Chorus*) That's obvious: so that these women can have their prick of the young men!

PRAXAGORA

What's more, slave girls will no longer be allowed to wear makeup and steal away the fond hearts of the free boys. They'll be allowed to sleep only with slaves, with their pussies trimmed like a woollen barn jacket.

ARISTOPHANES

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

725 φέρε ννν ἐγώ σοι παρακολουθῶ πλησίον,
ἴν' ἀποβλέπωμαι καὶ λέγωσιν ἐμὲ ταδί,
“τὸν τῆς στρατηγοῦ τοῦτον οὐ θαυμάζετε;”

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἐγὼ δ', ἵν' εἰς ἀγοράν γε τὰ σκεύη φέρω,
προχειριοῦμαι καξετάσω τὴν οὐσίαν.

ΧΟΡΟΤ

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

730 χώρει σὺ δεῦρο, κιναχύρα, καλὴ καλῶς
τῶν χρημάτων θύραζε πρώτη τῶν ἐμῶν,
ὅπως ἂν ἐντετριμμένη κανηφορῆς,
πολλοὺς κάτω δὴ θυλάκους στρέψασ’ ἐμούς.
ποῦ 'σθ' ἡ διφροφόρος; ἡ χύτρα, δεῦρ' ἔξιθι·

735 νὴ Δία μέλαινά γ', ὡς ἂν εἰ τὸ φάρμακον
ἔψουσ' ἔτυχες φὲ Λυσικράτης μελαίνεται.
ἴστω παρ' αὐτήν δεῦρ' ἵθ', ἡ κομμώτρια.
φέρε δεῦρο ταύτην τὴν ὑδρίαν, ὑδριαφόρε,
ἐνταῦθα. σὺ δὲ δεῦρ' ἡ κιθαρῳδός, ἔξιθι,
740 πολλάκις ἀναστήσασά μ' εἰς ἐκκλησίαν
ἀωρὶ νύκτωρ διὰ τὸν ὅρθριον νόμον.
ὁ τὴν σκάφην λαβὼν προΐτω τὰ κηρία
κόμιζε, τοὺς θαλλοὺς καθίστη πλησίον,

⁵⁵ The utensils are arrayed like participants in a major ritual procession such as the Panathenaea.

⁵⁶ The scholia identify this utensil as a hand mill.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

BLEPYRUS

Say, I'd like to tag along at your side, and share the spotlight, with people saying, "Look, that's none other than the Lady Commander's husband!"

Exit PRAXAGORA and BLEPYRUS.

NEIGHBOR

As for me, if I'm to be taking my possessions to the market-place, I'd better collect them and take inventory of what I've got.

Exit NEIGHBOR into his house.

The Chorus sing a brief song, not preserved; then NEIGHBOR comes out of his house, followed by two slaves, Sicon and Parmenon, who bring out household utensils and line them up in the street.

NEIGHBOR

You there, my pretty bran sieve, first of my possessions, come prettily outside here, so you can be the Basket Bearer,⁵⁵ since you're so well powdered by all those bags of my flour that you've emptied. Where's the Chair Bearer? Cooking Pot, come outside here. My God, you're black, as if it was you that boiled the concoction Lysicrates uses to dye his hair! You stand next to her. Come here, my Maid in Waiting. Jug Bearer, bring that jug over here. And you come out here and be our Musician, since you've so often gotten me up for Assembly with your morning song at an ungodly hour of the night.⁵⁶ Whoever's got the Tray come forward; bring the honeycombs, and put the olive

ARISTOPHANES

καὶ τὸ τρίποδ' ἔξενεγκε καὶ τὴν λήκυθον.
745 τὰ χυτρίδι ἥδη καὶ τὸν ὄχλον ἀφίετε.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἐγὼ καταθήσω τάμα; κακοδαίμων ἄρα
ἀνὴρ ἔσομαι καὶ νοῦν ὀλίγον κεκτημένος.
μὰ τὸν Ποσειδῶ γ' οὐδέποτ', ἀλλὰ βασανιῶ
πρώτιστον αὐτὰ πολλάκις καὶ σκέψομαι.
750 οὐ γὰρ τὸν ἐμὸν ἴδρωτα καὶ φειδωλίαν
οὐδὲν πρὸς ἔπος οὕτως ἀνοῆτως ἐκβαλῶ,
πρὶν ἐκπύθωμαι πᾶν τὸ πρᾶγμ' ὅπως ἔχει.
οὗτος, τί τὰ σκευάρια ταυτὶ βούλεται;
πότερον μετοικιζόμενος ἔξενήνοχας
αὐτὸν ἡ φέρεις ἐνέχυρα θήσων;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

755 οὐδαμῶς.

ΑΝΗΡ

τί δῆτ' ἐπὶ στοίχου στὶν οὕτως; οὕτως τι μὴν
Ίέρωνι τῷ κήρυκι πομπὴν πέμπετε;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ' ἀποφέρειν αὐτὰ μέλλω τῇ πόλει
ἔστι τὴν ἀγορὰν κατὰ τοὺς δεδογμένους νόμους.

ΑΝΗΡ

μέλλεις ἀποφέρειν;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πάνυ γε.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

branches down beside them; bring out the two Tripods and the Oil Flask. Now let the throng of little pots follow along.

Enter SELFISH MAN.

SELFISH MAN

Imagine me turning in my stuff! I'd be a sorry excuse for a man, and virtually brainless. Never, by god! No, first of all I'll have to test and study the situation very carefully. On the strength of mere words I'm hardly about to throw away the fruits of my sweat and thrift in this sort of mindless way, until I've made thorough inquiries about the whole situation. You there, what's the point of these utensils? Are you moving? Do you mean to pawn them?

NEIGHBOR

Certainly not.

SELFISH MAN

Then why are they lined up like this? You're not arranging a procession for Hieron⁵⁷ the auctioneer, are you?

NEIGHBOR

God no! We're getting them ready to go to the marketplace for surrender to the state: it's the law of the land.

SELFISH MAN

You mean to turn them in?

NEIGHBOR

Of course.

⁵⁷ Otherwise unknown.

ARISTOPHANES

ANHP

760 κακοδαίμων ἄρ' εἴτε
νὴ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτῆρα.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πῶς;

ANHP

πῶς; ῥάδιως.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τί δ'; οὐχὶ πειθαρχεῖν με τοῖς νόμοισι δεῖ;

ANHP

ποίοισιν, ὡ δύστηνε;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τοῖς δεδογμένοις.

ANHP

δεδογμένοισιν; ὡς ἀνόητος ἥσθ' ἄρα.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἀνόητος;

ANHP

οὐ γάρ; ἡλιθιώτατος μὲν οὖν
ἀπαξαπάντων.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ὅτι τὸ ταπτόμενον ποιῶ;

ANHP

τὸ ταπτόμενον γὰρ δεῖ ποιεῖν τὸν σώφρονα;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SELFISH MAN

Then, Zeus save us, you're a loser!

NEIGHBOR

How so?

SELFISH MAN

It's easy to see.

NEIGHBOR

Really? I'm not supposed to obey the laws?

SELFISH MAN

What laws, you sadsack?

NEIGHBOR

The laws that have been duly enacted.

SELFISH MAN

Duly enacted! How stupid can you get?

NEIGHBOR

Stupid?

SELFISH MAN

Well, aren't you? And not just stupid, but the biggest simpleton in the world?

NEIGHBOR

Because I do what I'm told?

SELFISH MAN

So you think the man of sense ought to do what he's told?

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

μάλιστα πάντων.

ΑΝΗΡ

τὸν μὲν οὖν ἀβέλτερον.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

σὺ δ' οὐ καταθεῖναι διανοεῖ;

ΑΝΗΡ

φυλάξομαι,

770 *πρὶν ἂν γ' ἵδω τὸ πλῆθος ὅ τι βουλεύεται.*

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

*τί γὰρ ἄλλο γ' ἢ φέρειν παρεσκευασμένοι
τὰ χρήματ' εἰσίν;*

ΑΝΗΡ

ἄλλ' ἵδων ἐπειθόμην.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

λέγουσι γοῦν ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς.

ΑΝΗΡ

λέξουσι γάρ.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

καί φασιν οἴσειν ἀράμενοι.

ΑΝΗΡ

φήσουσι γάρ.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἀπολεῖς ἀπιστῶν πάντ'.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR

Above everything else.

SELFISH MAN

No, that's what the imbecile does.

NEIGHBOR

So you don't intend to turn in your goods?

SELFISH MAN

I intend to be cautious, until I see what most people do.

NEIGHBOR

Why, they're getting ready to turn in their goods, of course.

SELFISH MAN

Well, I'll believe that when I see it.

NEIGHBOR

That's what they're saying around town, anyway.

SELFISH MAN

Say it? Sure they will.

NEIGHBOR

They're promising to bring their stuff in personally.

SELFISH MAN

Promise? Sure they will.

NEIGHBOR

You'll be the death of me with your total skepticism!

ARISTOPHANES

775

ΑΝΗΡ

ἀπιστήσουσι γάρ.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οἱ Ζεύς σέ γ᾽ ἐπιτρίψειεν.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἐπιτρίψουσι γάρ.

οἴσειν δοκεῖς τιν' ὅστις αὐτῶν νοῦν ἔχει;
οὐ γὰρ πάτριον τοῦτ' ἔστιν.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἀλλὰ λαμβάνειν

ἡμᾶς μόνον δεῖ;

ΑΝΗΡ

νὴ Δία· καὶ γὰρ οἱ θεοί.

780 γυνώσει δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν χειρῶν γε τῶν ἀγαλμάτων
ὅταν γὰρ εὐχώμεσθα διδόναι τὰ γαθά,
ἔστηκεν ἐκτείνοντα τὴν χεῖρ' ὑπτίαν,
οὐχ ὡς τι δώσοντ' ἀλλ' ὅπως τι ληφτεῖται.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ὦ δαιμόνι' ἀνδρῶν, ἔα με τῶν προύργου τι δρᾶν.

785 ταυτὶ γάρ ἔστι συνδετέα. ποῦ μούσθ' ἴμας;

ΑΝΗΡ

δηντως γὰρ οἴσεις;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ναὶ μὰ Δία, καὶ δὴ μὲν οὖν
τωδὶ ξυνάπτω τὰ τρίποδε.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SELFISH MAN

Be skeptical? Sure they will.

NEIGHBOR

God damn you!

SELFISH MAN

Damn? Sure they will. Do you really think that anyone with a brain is going to turn it in? That's not in our national character.

NEIGHBOR

You mean we should only take?

SELFISH MAN

Absolutely. That's what the gods do too. You can tell by the hands on their statues: whenever we pray for blessings, they stand there with their hands out, palm up, plainly not to give something, but to get something.

NEIGHBOR

Listen, wacko, let me get on with my business here. These things need to be packed. Where's my strap?

SELFISH MAN

So you're really going to surrender them?

NEIGHBOR

Yes indeed. In fact, I'm tying up these two tripods now.

ARISTOPHANES

ΑΝΗΡ

τῆς μωρίας,
τὸ μηδὲ περιμείναντα τοὺς ἄλλους ὃ τι
δράσουσιν εἴτα τηνικαῦτ' ἥδη—

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τί δρᾶν;

ΑΝΗΡ

790 ἐπαναμένειν, ἔπειτα διατρίβειν ἔτι.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἴνα δὴ τί;

ΑΝΗΡ

σεισμὸς εἰ γένοιτο πολλάκις,
ἢ πῦρ ἀπότροπον, ἢ διάξειν γαλῆ,
παύσαιντ' ἂν ἐσφέροντες, ωμοβρόντητε σύ.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

χαρίεντα γοῦν πάθοιμ' ἄν, εἰ μὴ χοιμ' ὅποι
ταῦτα καταθείην.

ΑΝΗΡ

795 μὴ γὰρ οὐ λάβοις ὅποι;
θάρρει, καταθήσεις, καὶ νησὶς ἔλθης.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τιή;

ΑΝΗΡ

ἐγώδα τούτους χειροτονοῦντας μὲν ταχύ,
ἄττ' ἂν δὲ δόξῃ, ταῦτα πάλιν ἀρνοῦμένους.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SELFISH MAN

What foolishness, not to wait and see what others are going to do, and then and only then—

NEIGHBOR

Do what?

SELFISH MAN

Wait a little longer, then put it off.

NEIGHBOR

The object being what?

SELFISH MAN

There might be an earthquake, or some ill-omened lightning, or a black cat darting across the street. That would put a stop to their depositions, you mental case!

NEIGHBOR

I'd be in a fine mess if I found no room left to deposit this stuff.

SELFISH MAN

Ah, no more room. Don't worry, they'll take your deposit even if you wait a couple of days.

NEIGHBOR

What do you mean?

SELFISH MAN

I know these people: they're quick to vote on something, then they turn around and refuse to abide by whatever it was.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οῖσουσιν, ὁ τᾶν.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἢν δὲ μὴ κομίσωσι, τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἀμέλει, κομιοῦσιν.

ΑΝΗΡ

800 ἢν δὲ μὴ κομίσωσι, τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

μαχούμεθ' αὐτοῖς.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἢν δὲ κρείττους ὁσι, τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἄπειμ ἐάσας.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἢν δὲ πωλῶσ' αὐτά, τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

διαρραγείης.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἢν διαρραγῶ δέ, τί;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

καλῶς ποιήσεις.

ΑΝΗΡ

σὺ δ' ἐπιθυμεῖς εἰσφέρειν;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR

They'll bring in their stuff, pal.

SELFISH MAN

And what if they don't?

NEIGHBOR

Don't worry, they will.

SELFISH MAN

And what if they don't?

NEIGHBOR

We'll fight them.

SELFISH MAN

And what if they outnumber you?

NEIGHBOR

I'll walk away and leave them to it.

SELFISH MAN

And if they sell your stuff?

NEIGHBOR

Blast you to bits!

SELFISH MAN

And if I do blast to bits?

NEIGHBOR

You'll be doing a great service.

SELFISH MAN

Do you really want to surrender your stuff?

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

805 ἔγωγε· καὶ γὰρ τοὺς ἐμαυτοῦ γείτονας
όρῳ φέροντας.

ΑΝΗΡ

πάνυ γ' ἀν οὖν Ἀντισθένης
αὐτὸν εἰσενέγκοι· πολὺ γὰρ ἐμμελέστερον
πρότερον χέσαι πλεῦν ἢ τριάκονθος ήμέρας.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οὔμωζε.

ΑΝΗΡ

Καλλίμαχος δ' οὐ χοροδιδάσκαλος
αὐτοῖσιν εἰσοίσει τι;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

810 πλείω Καλλίου.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἄνθρωπος οὗτος ἀποβαλεῖ τὴν οὐσίαν.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

δεινόν γε λέγεις.

ΑΝΗΡ

τί δεινόν; ὥσπερ οὐχ ὄρῳ
ἀεὶ τοιαῦτα γιγνόμενα ψηφίσματα.
οὐκ οἶσθ' ἐκεῖν' οὐδοξεῖ τὸ περὶ τῶν ἀλῶν;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἔγωγε.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR

I do. And I see that my own neighbors are doing it too.

SELFISH MAN

Antisthenes would contribute his stuff—sure! It would suit him much better to take a month-long shit first!

NEIGHBOR

Go to hell!

SELFISH MAN

And Callimachus the chorus master,⁵⁸ would he contribute anything?

NEIGHBOR

More than Callias.⁵⁹

SELFISH MAN

(aside) This guy's gonna lose everything he has!

NEIGHBOR

That's putting it pretty drastically.

SELFISH MAN

What's so drastic? As if I don't see decrees like this all the time! Don't you remember the one about salt?

NEIGHBOR

Sure.

⁵⁸ Otherwise unknown.

⁵⁹ See *Frogs* 429 n.

ARISTOPHANES

ΑΝΗΡ

815 τοὺς χαλκοῦς δ' ἔκείνους ἡνίκα
ἐψηφισάμεθ', οὐκ οἶσθα;

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

καὶ κακόν γέ μοι
τὸ κόμμ' ἐγένετ' ἔκεινο. πωλῶν γὰρ βότρυς
μεστὴν ἀπῆρα τὴν γνάθον χαλκῶν ἔχων,
κἄπειτ' ἔχώρουν εἰς ἀγορὰν ἐπ' ἄλφιτα.
820 ἔπειθ', ὑπέχοντος ἄρτι μου τὸν θύλακον,
ἀνέκραγ' ὁ κῆρυξ. “μὴ δέχεσθαι μηδένα
χαλκὸν τὸ λοιπόν· ἀργύρῳ γὰρ χρώμεθα.”

ΑΝΗΡ

τὸ δ' ἔναγχος οὐχ ἄπαντες ἡμεῖς ῷμνυμεν
τάλαντ' ἔσεσθαι πεντακόσια τῇ πόλει
825 τῆς τετταρακοστῆς, ἦν ἐπόρισ' Εὐριππίδης;
κεύθὺς κατεχρύσον πᾶς ἀνὴρ Εὐριππίδην.
ὅτε δὴ δ' ἀνασκοπουμένοις ἐφαίνετο
ὁ Διὸς Κόρινθος καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμ' οὐκ ἥρκεσεν,
πάλιν κατεπίττουν πᾶς ἀνὴρ Εὐριππίδην.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

830 οὐ ταῦτόν, ὥ ταν. τότε μὲν ἡμεῖς ἥρχομεν,
νῦν δ' αἱ γυναικες.

ΑΝΗΡ

αἱ γ' ἐγὼ φυλάξομαι,
νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ, μὴ κατουρήσωσί μου.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SELFISH MAN

And when we voted for those copper coins, remember that?⁶⁰

NEIGHBOR

Yes, that coinage was certainly bad for me. After selling my grapes I shoved off with a mouthful of those coppers to the market for barley, and as soon as I held out my bag the herald shouted, "no one is to take any more copper; we're using silver now."

SELFISH MAN

And didn't we all recently swear that the city would raise five hundred talents from the two and a half percent tax levied by Heurippides?⁶¹ And how Heurippides was everyone's golden boy? But finally we looked into the matter more carefully, and it turned out to be just "Corinthus son of Zeus,"⁶² a quite inadequate measure; then Heurippides became everyone's tarbaby.

NEIGHBOR

That's different, pal: we were in power then; now the women are.

SELFISH MAN

And I mean to keep an eye on them, so help me Poseidon, so they don't piss all over me!

⁶⁰ See *Frogs* 718–37. ⁶¹ Son of Adeimantus of Myrrhinus and protege of Conon; after the failure of his tax plan, his name came to denote a score of forty in games of dice.

⁶² See *Frogs* 439 n.

825–29 Εὐριπίδης Bergk: Εὐριπίδης a
946 δράσει Brunck: δράσοι Γ: δράσεις R Λ

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οὐκ οἶδ' ὁ τι ληρεῖς. φέρε σὺ τάναφορον, ὁ παῖς.

ΚΗΡΤΚΑΙΝΑ

835 ω πάντες ἀστοί, νῦν γὰρ οὗτω ταῦτ' ἔχει,
χωρεῖτ', ἐπείγεσθ' εὐθὺ τῆς στρατηγίδος,
ὅπως ἀν ύμῖν ἡ τύχη κληρουμένοις
φράσῃ καθ' ἔκαστον ἄνδρ' ὅποι δειπνήσετε·
ώς αἱ τράπεζαι γ' εἰσὶν ἐπινευημέναι
ἀγαθῶν ἀπάντων καὶ παρεσκευασμέναι,
840 κλῖναι τε σισυρῶν καὶ δαπίδων νενασμέναι.
κρατῆρας ἐγκιρνᾶσιν, αἱ μυροπάλιδες
ἐστᾶσ' ἐφεξῆς, τὰ τεμάχη ριπίζεται,
λαγῳ' ἀναπηγνύασι, πόπανα πέττεται,
στέφανοι πλέκονται, φρύγεται τραγήματα,
845 χύτρας ἔτνους ἔψουσιν αἱ νεώταται·
Σμοῖος δὲ ἐν αὐταῖς ἵππικὴν στολὴν ἔχων
τὰ τῶν γυναικῶν διακαθαίρει τρύβλια·
Γέρων δὲ χωρεῖ χλανίδα καὶ κονίποδας
ἔχων, καχάζων μεθ' ἑτέρουν νεανίον·
850 ἐμβὰς δὲ κεῖται καὶ τρίβων ἐρριμμένος.
πρὸς ταῦτα χωρεῖθ', ὡς ὁ τὴν μᾶζαν φέρων
ἔστηκεν· ἀλλὰ τὰς γνάθους διοίγετε.

ΑΝΗΡ

οὐκοῦν βαδιοῦμαι δῆτα. τί γὰρ ἔστηκ' ἔχων
ἐνταῦθ', ἐπειδὴ ταῦτα τῇ πόλει δοκεῖ;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR

I don't know what you're going on about. Hoist that baggage, boy.

Enter HERALD.

HERALD

Now here this, all you citizens—yes, all are included now: get a move on and go straight to the Lady Commander's place, so that the luck of the draw can determine where each man among you will dine. The tables are set and heaped high with every kind of treat, and the couches are draped with cushions and coverlets. They're mixing the wine in bowls, and the scent girls are standing by. The fish fillets are on the grill; they're spitting hares; the rolls are abake, garlands plaited, munchies roasting; the littlest girls are boiling pots of pea soup, and Smoeus⁶³ is with them in his riding suit, licking the women's bowls clean. And Geron's⁶⁴ there wearing a new suit and fashionable pumps, joking with another young blade, his cheap boots and shabby cloak tossed aside. This is what you're invited to, so come along! The slaves are waiting with your daily bread; just open your mouths!

Exit HERALD.

SELFISH MAN

Well then, I'm ready to go! Why stand around here when the city has ratified all this?

⁶³ Noted for cunnilingus.

⁶⁴ Otherwise unknown; the name means "oldster."

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

855 καὶ ποῖ βαδιεῖ σὺ μὴ καταθεὶς τὴν οὐσίαν;

ΑΝΗΡ

ἐπὶ δεῖπνον.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

οὐ δῆτ', ἦν γ' ἐκείναις νοῦς ἐνῷ,
πρίν ἂν γ' ἀπενέγκης.

ΑΝΗΡ

ἀλλ' ἀποίσω.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

πηνίκα;

ΑΝΗΡ

οὐ τούμόν, ὡς τᾶν, ἐμποδὼν ἔσται.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

τί δαί;

ΑΝΗΡ

ἔτέρους ἀποίσειν φήμ' ἔθ' ύστέρους ἐμοῦ.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

βαδιεῖ δὲ δειπνήσων ὅμως;

ΑΝΗΡ

860

τί γὰρ πάθω;

τὰ δυνατὰ γὰρ δεῖ τῇ πόλει ξυλλαμβάνειν
τοὺς εὖ φρονοῦντας.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἦν δὲ κωλύσωσι, τί;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

NEIGHBOR

Just where do you think you're going? You haven't turned in your goods.

SELFISH MAN

To dinner.

NEIGHBOR

Oh no you don't! If the women have any sense they won't feed you till you've brought in your property.

SELFISH MAN

Don't worry, I will.

NEIGHBOR

When?

SELFISH MAN

It won't be me that holds anyone up, my man.

NEIGHBOR

Meaning what?

SELFISH MAN

I mean others are bound to turn their stuff in even later than me.

NEIGHBOR

And you mean to go to dinner anyway?

SELFISH MAN

Sure, how can I help but go? All right-minded people should assist the state to the best of their ability.

NEIGHBOR

And what if they won't let you in?

ARISTOPHANES

ΑΝΗΡ

όμοσ' εἶμι κύψας.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἢν δὲ μαστιγῶσι, τί;

ΑΝΗΡ

καλούμεθ' αὐτάς.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

ἢν δὲ καταγελῶσι, τί;

ΑΝΗΡ

ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις ἐστώς—

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

865 τί δράσεις; εἰπέ μοι.

ΑΝΗΡ

τῶν ἐσφερόντων ἀρπάσομαι τὰ σιτία.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

βάδιζε τοίνυν ὕστερος· σὺ δ', ὁ Σίκων
καὶ Παρμένων, αἴρεσθε τὴν παμπησίαν.

ΑΝΗΡ

φέρε νῦν ἐγώ σοι ξυμφέρω.

ΓΕΙΤΩΝ

μή, μηδαμῶς.

870 δέδοικα γὰρ μὴ καὶ παρὰ τῇ στρατηγίδι,
ὅταν κατατιθῶ, προσποιῆ τῶν χρημάτων.

ΑΝΗΡ

νὴ τὸν Δία δεῖ γοῦν μηχανήματός τινος,
ὅπως τὰ μὲν ὅντα χρήματ' ἔξω, τοῖσδέ τε

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SELFISH MAN

I'll lower my head and charge them.

NEIGHBOR

And if they beat you like a slave?

SELFISH MAN

I'll sue them.

NEIGHBOR

And if they laugh at your threats?

SELFISH MAN

I'll stand in the doorway—

NEIGHBOR

And do what, I'd like to know.

SELFISH MAN

—and snatch the food that they bring in.

NEIGHBOR

In that case you'd better go in after me. You there, Sicon,
and you too, Parmenon, hoist my estate.

SELFISH MAN

Let me help you carry that.

NEIGHBOR

No, no thanks! I don't want to bring my contribution to the
Lady Commander and have you pretending it's yours.

Exit NEIGHBOR and Slaves.

SELFISH MAN

I definitely need some kind of scheme to save the property

ARISTOPHANES

τῶν ματτομένων κοινῇ μεθέξω πως ἐγώ.

875 ὁρθῶς, ἔμοιγε φαίνεται· βαδιστέον
ὅμοσ' ἔστὶ δειπνήσοντα κού μελλητέον.

XOROT

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τί ποθ' ἄνδρες οὐχ ἥκουσιν; ὥρα δ' ἦν πάλαι.
ἐγὼ δὲ καταπεπλασμένη ψυμυθίω
ἔστηκα καὶ κροκωτὸν ἡμφιεσμένη
880 ἀργός, μινυρομένη τι πρὸς ἐμαυτὴν μέλος,
παίζοντος ὅπως ἀν περιλάβοιμ' αὐτῶν τινὰ
παριόντα. Μοῦσαι, δεῦρ' ἵτ' ἐπὶ τούμὸν στόμα
μελύδριον εὑροῦσαι τι τῶν Ἰωνικῶν.

NEANIS

νῦν μέν με παρακύψασα προϊθῆσ, ὥστα πρά.
885 ώστος δέ ἐρήμας οὐ παρούσης ἐνθάδε
ἔμοι τρυγήσειν καὶ προσάξεσθαι τινα
ἄδοντος· ἐγὼ δέ, ἦν τοῦτο δρᾶς, ἀντάσσομαι.
κεὶ γὰρ δι' ὅχλου τοῦτον ἔστὶ τοῖς θεωμένοις,
ὅμως ἔχει τερπνόν τι καὶ κωμῳδικόν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

890 τούτῳ διαλέγουν κάποιχώρησον· σὺ δέ,
φιλοττάριον αὐλητά, τοὺς αὐλοὺς λαβὼν
ἄξιον ἔμοι καὶ σοῦ προσαύλησον μέλος.

εἴ τις ἀγαθὸν βούλεται πα-
θεῖν τι, παρ' ἔμοι χρὴ καθεύδειν·
οὐ γὰρ ἐν νέαις τὸ σοφὸν ἔν-

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

I've got and also share in the treats being whipped up for these people. I think I've got it; I must commence Operation Dinner, and on the double!

Exit SELFISH MAN.

The Chorus sing a brief song, not preserved.

FIRST OLD WOMAN appears in the central doorway of the stage house, while a GIRL appears at the window of the house next door; both look up and down the street.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

What can be keeping the men? They're long overdue. Here I am, all plastered with makeup and wearing a party dress, just standing around, whistling myself a song, and my trap all set to snag one of them as he passes. Ye Muses, come sit on my lips, and find me some spicy Ionian tune.

GIRL

This time you're on lookout ahead of me, old moldy. You thought you'd strip an unwatched vineyard when I wasn't around, and entice some guy with your singing. If you try it, I'll sing a song of my own. And even if the audience finds this boring, there's still something pleasantly comic about it.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

(presenting her rump) Put your complaints in here, and get lost! (to the piper) You, my dear little piper, pick up your pipes and blow a tune that'll do us both proud.

Whoever wants to have a good time
should sleep with me.
For finesse dwells not in girls

ARISTOPHANES

895 εστιν, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς πεπείροις.

οὐδέ τοι στέργειν ἀν ἐθέλοι μᾶλλον ἢ γὰ
τὸν φίλον φῆπερ ξυνείην,
ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἔτερον ἀν πέτουτο.

NEANIS

900 μὴ φθόνει ταῖσιν νέαισι·

τὸ τρυφερὸν γὰρ ἐμπέφυκε
τοῖς ἀπαλοῖσι μηροῖς,
κάπι τοῖς μήλοις ἐπαν-
θεῖ· σὺ δ', ὁ γραῦ, παραλέλεξαι κάντέτριψαι
905 τῷ Θανάτῳ μέλημα.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἐκπέσοι σου τὸ τρῆμα

τό τ' ἐπίκλιντρον ἀποβάλοις
βουλομένη σποδεῖσθαι.

κάπι τῆς κλίνης ὅφιν προσελκύσαιο

910 βουλομένη φιλῆσαι.

NEANIS

αἰαῖ, τί ποτε πείσομαι;

οὐχ ῆκει μούταιρος·

μόνη δ' αὐτοῦ λείπομ'. ἡ

γάρ μοι μήτηρ ἄλλῃ βέβηκεν.

καὶ τāλλα μ' οὐδὲν τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα δεῖ λέγειν.

915 ἀλλ', ὁ μαῖ, ἵκετεύομαι,

κάλει τὸν Ὀρθαγόραν,

917a ὅπως σαυτῆς ἀν κατόναι',

917b ἀντιβολῶ σε.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

but in ripe women.
You can bet she's no readier than I
to cherish the boyfriend I'm with,
but more likely to flit to another.

GIRL

Don't despise the girls,
for softness resides
in their tender thighs
and blossoms on their boobs.
But you, old bag, are tweezed and plastered,
the Grim Reaper's heartthrob.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

I hope your twat falls off,
and when you hanker for humping
you can't find your back seat.
And in bed when you hanker for smooching
I hope you take a snake in your arms.

GIRL

Ah, what will become of me?
My boyfriend hasn't come,
and I'm left here alone,
for my mother's out somewhere,
and I needn't say what comes next.
Well, nanny, I beg you,
call Doctor Dildo
so you can enjoy yourself.
Pretty please!

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ηδη τὸν ἀπ' Ἰωνίας
τρόπον, τάλαινα, κινησιᾶς.
920 δοκεῖς δέ μοι καὶ λάβδα κατὰ τοὺς Λεσβίους.

NEANIS

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄν ποθ' ὑφαρπάσαι-
ο τάμα παίγνια· τὴν δ'
923a ἐμὴν ὥραν οὐκ ἀπολεῖς
923b οὐδ' ἀπολήψει.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἄδ' ὄπόστα βούλει καὶ παράκυθ' ὥσπερ γαλῆ·
925 οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὡς σὲ πρότερον εἴσεισ' ἀντ' ἔμοῦ.

NEANIS

οῦκονν ἐπ' ἐκφοράν γε· καινόν γ', ω σαπρά.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οὐ δῆτα.

NEANIS

τί γὰρ ἄν γραῦ καινά τις λέγοι;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οὐ τούμὸν ὁδυνήσει σε γῆρας.

NEANIS

ἀλλὰ τί;
ἢ γχουσα μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ σὸν ψιμύθιον;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τί μοι διαλέγει;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Poor thing, you're already
itching for the Ionian toy,⁶⁵
and I think you also want to do the L, like the
Lesbians.⁶⁶

GIRL

But you'll never snatch
my boytoys away,
never spoil my youth
or poach a share.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Well, sing any tune you like, and peer out like a cat, be-
cause no man's going to visit you before me.

GIRL

Not for my funeral, anyway. Hey, that's a new one, old
moldy!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

No it isn't.

GIRL

No, who could tell an old lady anything new?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

It's not my age that'll hurt you.

GIRL

What then? Your makeup and rouge?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Why do you keep talking to me?

⁶⁵ I.e., a dildo.

⁶⁶ With whom classical Greeks associated fellatio.

ARISTOPHANES

NEANIS

σὺ δὲ τί διακύπτεις;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

930

ἔγώ;

ἄδω πρὸς ἐμαντὴν Ἐπιγένει τῷ μῷ φίλῳ.

NEANIS

σοὶ γὰρ φίλος τίς ἔστιν ἄλλος ἢ Γέρης;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

δείξει γε καὶ σοί. τάχα γὰρ εἶσιν ὡς ἐμέ.
όδι γὰρ αὐτός ἔστιν.

NEANIS

οὐ σοῦ γ', ὥλεθρε,

δεόμενος οὐδέν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

935

νὴ Δῖ, ὥ φθίνυλλα σύ.

NEANIS

δείξει τάχ' αὐτός, ὡς ἔγωγ' ἀπέρχομαι.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

κάγωγ', ἵνα γνῶς ὡς πολύ σου μεῖζον φρονῶ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

εἴθ' ἐξῆν παρὰ τῇ νέᾳ καθεύδειν
καὶ μὴ δει πρότερον διασποδῆσαι

⁶⁷ Identified by ancient commentators as the Geres of *Acharnians* 605, who would now be at least seventy; alternatively, the name may merely suggest *geron* ("old man").

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

GIRL

And why are you still peering around?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Me? I'm humming a tune for my sweetheart Epigenes.

GIRL

You've got a sweetheart? You must mean Geres.⁶⁷

FIRST OLD WOMAN

You'll see for yourself, since he'll soon be coming to visit me. In fact, here he comes now!

Enter EPIGENES, wearing a garland and holding a torch.

GIRL

Not for any business with you, old pest!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Au contraire, miss twiggy!

GIRL

He'll soon settle this himself; I'll be off now.

GIRL goes inside.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Me too, just so you'll see how much surer I am than you.

FIRST OLD WOMAN goes inside.

EPIGENES

How I wish I could sleep with the girl
and didn't first have to bang

ARISTOPHANES

940 ἀνάσιμον ἡ πρεσβυτέραν·
οὐ γὰρ ἀνασχετὸν τοῦτο γ' ἐλευθέρω.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οἵμώζων ἄρα νὴ Δία σποδήσεις·
οὐ γὰρ τὰπὶ Χαριξένης τάδ' ἔστιν.
κατὰ τὸν νόμον ταῦτα ποιεῖν
945 ἔστι δίκαιον, εἰ δημοκρατούμεθα.

ἀλλ' εἴμι τηρήσουσ' ὁ τι καὶ δράσει ποτέ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

εἴθ', ὦ θεοί, λάβοιμι τὴν καλὴν μόνην,
ἔφ' ἦν πεπωκὼς ἔρχομαι πάλαι ποθῶν.

ΝΕΑΝΙΣ

950 ἔξηπάτησα τὸ κατάρατον γράδιον·
φρούδη γάρ ἔστιν οἰομένη μ' ἔνδον μένειν.
ἀλλ' οὐτοσὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς οὐδὲ μεμνήμεθα.

(στρ.) δεῦρο δή, δεῦρο δή,
952b φίλον ἐμόν, δεῦρό μοι
πρόσελθε καὶ ξύνευνος
954a τὴν εὐφρόνην ὅπως ἔσει.
954b πάνυ γάρ τις ἔρως με δονεῖ
955 τῶνδε τῶν σῶν βοστρύχων.

952–68 horum carminum etsi textus (praecipue in antistropha)
per periphrasin depravatus est, sensus tamen satis perspicuus
961a suppl. Wilamowitz, cf. ad 963

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

a pug-nose or a crone!
This doesn't sit well with a free man.

FIRST OLD WOMAN reappears.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Then by heaven you'll bang to your sorrow;
this isn't Charixene's heydey.⁶⁸
If we still live under democracy,
we've got to do this legal and proper!

But I'll go inside to see what he ends up doing.

FIRST OLD WOMAN goes back inside.

EPIGENES

Ye gods, let me catch this pretty girl alone! It's her I've come for in my cups, her I've long desired.

GIRL reappears in her window.

GIRL

I've completely foxxed the little old lady, damn her; she's gone, thinking that I was going to stay inside. But here's the very boy we were talking about.

Hither now, hither now,
my dear one, hither
come to me and promise to be
my bedmate through the night.
A powerful passion sets me awhirl
for those curly locks of yours.

⁶⁸ Evidently a courtesan of the pre-democratic era, cf. Cratinus fr. 153, Theopompus com. fr. 51.

ἄτοπος δ' ἔγκειται μοί τις πόθος,
 ὃς με διακναίστας ἔχει.
 μέθεις, ἵκνοῦμαί σ', Ἐρως,
 959a καὶ ποίησον τόνδ' ἐσ εὐνὴν
 959b τὴν ἐμὴν ἵκέσθαι.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

(ἀντ.) δεῦρο δή, δεῦρο δή,
 961a <φίλον ἐμόν,> καὶ σύ μοι
 961b καταδραμοῦσα τὴν θύραν
 961c τήνδ' ἄνοιξον· εἰ δὲ μή,
 καταπεσὼν κείσομαι.
 ἀλλ' ἐν σῷ βούλομ' ἐγὼ κόλπῳ
 πληκτίζεσθαι μετὰ τῆς πυγῆς.

965 Κύπρι, τί μ' ἐκμαίνεις ἐπὶ ταύτῃ;
 μέθεις, ἵκνοῦμαί σ', Ἐρως,
 968a καὶ ποίησον τήνδ' ἐσ εὐνὴν
 968b τὴν ἐμὴν ἵκέσθαι.

(στρ.) καὶ ταῦτα μέντοι μετρίως
 πρὸς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάγκην
 εἰρημέν' ἔστιν. σὺ δέ μοι,
 970 φίλτατον, ὡς ἵκετεύω,
 ἄνοιξον, ἀσπάζου με·
 διά τοι σὲ πόνους ἔχω.

(ἀντ.) ὡς χρυσοδαίδαλτον ἐμὸν
 μέλημα, Κύπριδος ἔρνος,

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

A strange longing besets me
and grinds me in its grip.
Release me, Eros, I beg you!
Please make this boy
come to my very own bed.

PIGENES

Hither now, hither now,
you too, my dear one,
run down to this door for me
and open it wide; if you don't,
I'll fall flat on the doorstep!
But I'd rather lie in your lap
and swap strokes with your butt.
Aphrodite, why drive me mad for this girl?
Release me, Eros, I beg you!
Please make this girl
come to my very own bed.

Yet these words of mine
can but blandly express
my actual compulsion. But now,
my darling, oh, I beg you,
open up and welcome me.
It's you I'm hurting for!

Ah my fine-wrought golden
prize, bud of Aphrodite,

⁹⁶³ ἀλλ' Wilamowitz: φίλον, ἀλλ' a

⁹⁶³ σῳ βούλομ' ἐγώ Wilamowitz: τῷ σῳ βούλομαι a

⁹⁸⁷ πετροῖς (πετροῖς Γ) Γ A: Παυτοῖς R Λ Schol.

ARISTOPHANES

μέλιττα Μούσης, Χαρίτων
θρέμμα, Τρυφῆς πρόσωπον,

975a ἄνοιξον, ἀσπάζου με.

975b διά τοι σὲ πόνους ἔχω.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οῦτος, τί κόπτεις; μῶν ἐμὲ ζητεῖς;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

πόθεν;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

καὶ τὴν θύραν γ' ἥραττες.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀποθάνοιμ' ἄρα.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τοῦ δαὶ δεόμενος δᾶδ' ἔχων ἐλήλυθας;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

Ἄναφλύστιον ζητῶν τιν' ἄνθρωπον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τίνα;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

980 οὐ τὸν Σεβῖνον, δὸν σὺ προσδοκᾶς ἵσως.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, ἦν τε βούλη γ' ἦν τε μῆ.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

honeybee of the Muses, nursing
of the Graces, personification of Pleasure,
open up and welcome me.
Its you I'm hurting for!

Enter FIRST OLD WOMAN from her door.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Hey you, what's this knocking? Not looking for me, are
you?

EPIGENES

Surely you jest!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Well, you certainly battered on my door.

EPIGENES

I'll be damned if I did!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Then what are you after, with the torch and all?

EPIGENES

I'm looking for a fellow from Wankton.⁶⁹

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Which one?

EPIGENES

Not Mr. Humpus, whom you're probably expecting.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

(seizing him) Yes, by Aphrodite, whether you like it or not.

⁶⁹ See *Frogs* 427 n.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ννὺ τὰς ὑπερεξηκοντέτεις
εἰσάγομεν, ἀλλ' εἰσαῦθις ἀναβεβλήμεθα·
τὰς ἐντὸς εἴκοσιν γὰρ ἐκδικάζομεν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

985 ἐπὶ τῆς προτέρας ἀρχῆς γε ταῦτ' ἦν, ὡς γλύκων·
ννὺ δὲ πρῶτον εἰσάγειν ἡμᾶς δοκεῖ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τῷ βουλομένῳ γε κατὰ τὸν ἐν πεττοῖς νόμον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐδείπνεις κατὰ τὸν ἐν πεττοῖς νόμον.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι λέγεις· τηνδεδί μοι κρονστέον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

990 ὅταν γε κρούσῃς τὴν ἐμὴν πρῶτον θύραν.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ννὺ κρησέραν αἰτούμεθα.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οἶδ' ὅτι φιλοῦμαι· νῦν δὲ θαυμάζεις ὅτι
θύρασί μ' ηὗρες. ἀλλὰ πρόσαγε τὸ στόμα.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὡς μέλ' ὄρρωδῶ τὸν ἐραστήν σου.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τίνα;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

EPIGENES

(*shaking her off*) Wait: we're entering no hearings for cases over sixty just now; we've tabled them for future consideration, while we clear our docket of cases under twenty.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

That was true under the old system, my sweet; but under current law you've got to enter us first.

EPIGENES

It's dealer's choice, by the rules of play.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

But you didn't eat dinner by those rules of play.

EPIGENES

I don't know what you're talking about. I've got to beat on this door.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Not until you first beat on mine!

EPIGENES

No thanks, we're not after a beater just now.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

I know I'm loved; you were just surprised to find me outside. Come on, give us a kiss.

EPIGENES

No ma'am; I'm terrified of your lover.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Who's that?

1043 λόγον Le Febvre: νόμον a

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τὸν τῶν γραφέων ἄριστον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

995

οὐτος δ' ἔστι τίς;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ὅς τοῖς νεκροῖσι ζωγραφεῖ τὰς ληκύθους.
ἀλλ' ἄπιθ', ὅπως μή σ' ἐπὶ θύραισιν ὅψεται.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οἶδ', οἶδ' ὁ τι βούλει.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σέ, μὴ Δία.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

μὰ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, ᾗ μ' ἔλαχε κληρουμένη,
μὴ γώ σ' ἀφῆσω.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1000

παραφρονεῖς, ὡς γράδιον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ληρεῖς· ἐγὼ δ' ἄξω σ' ἐπὶ τάμᾳ στρώματα.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τί δῆτα κρεάγρας τοῖς κάδοις ὠνοίμεθ' ἄν,
ἔξօν καθέντα γράδιον τοιουτονὶ¹
ἐκ τῶν φρεάτων τοὺς κάδους ξυλλαμβάνειν;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

1005

μὴ σκῶπτέ μ', ὡς τάλαν, ἀλλ' ἐπου δεῦρ' ὡς ἐμέ.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PIGENES

The best-selling painter.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

And who's that?

PIGENES

The one who decorates funeral urns.⁷⁰ Better scram before he spots you in the doorway.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

I know what you're after, I know.

PIGENES

And I certainly know what *you're* after!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

By Aphrodite, who gave me the luck of the draw, I'm not giving you up!

PIGENES

You're crazy, old lady.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Nonsense! I'm going to escort you to my bed.

PIGENES

Why should we buy tongs for our buckets, when we could run a crone like this down the well and use her to haul up those buckets?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

No more teasing, my boy; just come this way to my place.

⁷⁰ I.e., Death.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀνάγκη μούστιν, εἰ μὴ τῶν ἐμῶν
τὴν πεντακοσιοστὴν κατέθηκας τῇ πόλει.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τὴν τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, δεῖ γε μέντοι σ'. ὡς ἐγὼ
τοῖς τηλικούτοις ξυγκαθεύδονσ' ἥδομαι.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1010 ἐγὼ δὲ ταῖς γε τηλικαύταις ἄχθομαι,
κούκ άν πιθοίμην οὐδέποτ'.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἀλλὰ νὴ Δία

ἀναγκάσει τουτί σε.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τοῦτο δ' ἔστι τί;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ψήφισμα, καθ' ὃ σε δεῖ βαδίζειν ὡς ἐμέ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

λέγ' αὐτὸ τί ποτε κᾶστι.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

καὶ δῆ σοι λέγω.

1015 “ἔδοξε ταῖς γυναιξὶν, ἦν ἀνὴρ νέος
νέας ἐπιθυμῆ, μὴ σποδεῖν αὐτὴν πρὶν ἀν
τὴν γραῦν προκρούσῃ πρῶτον. ἦν δὲ μὴ ὑέλη
πρότερον προκρούειν, ἀλλ' ἐπιθυμῆ τῆς νέας,
ταῖς πρεσβυτέραις γυναιξὶν ἔστω τὸν νέον
1020 ἔλκειν ἀνατεὶ λαβομένας τοῦ παττάλου.”

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

EPIGENES

No! I don't have to, unless you've paid the city the .2% tax on me.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

By Aphrodite, you do have to. I just love sleeping with boys your age.

EPIGENES

And I just hate sleeping with women your age! I'll never consent.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

(producing a scroll) But this will make you.

EPIGENES

What's that?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

A decree that says you've got to come to my house.

EPIGENES

Read out what it actually says.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

All right, I shall. (*reading*) "The women have decreed: if a young man desires a young woman he may not hump her until he bangs an old woman first. Should he in his desire for the young woman refuse to do this preliminary banging, the older women shall be entitled with impunity to drag the young man off by his pecker."

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

οῖμοι, Προκρούστης τήμερον γενήσομαι.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τοῖς γὰρ νόμοις τοῖς ἡμετέροισι πειστέον.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τί δ' ἦν ἀφαιρῆται μ' ἀνὴρ τῶν δημοτῶν
ἢ τῶν φίλων ἐλθών τις;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἀλλ' οὐ κύριος

1025 ὑπὲρ μέδιμνόν ἔστ' ἀνὴρ οὐδεὶς ἔτι.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἔξωμοσία δ' οὐκ ἔστιν;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

οὐ γὰρ δεῖ στροφῆς.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἔμπορος εἶναι σκήψομαι.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

κλάων γε σύ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τί δῆτα χρὴ δρᾶν;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

δεῦρ' ἀκολουθεῖν ὡς ἔμε.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

καὶ ταῦτ' ἀνάγκη μούστι;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

PIGENES

Dear me, this very day I'm to play Procrustes!⁷¹

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Our laws must be obeyed.

PIGENES

What if one of my demesmen or friends comes and offers
bail for me?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

No man is any longer permitted to transact business over
the one-bushel limit.⁷²

PIGENES

Can't I swear off my duty?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

You can't squirm out of this duty!

PIGENES

I'll get myself exempted as a merchant.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

You'll be sorry if you do!

PIGENES

So what am I to do?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Come along this way to my place.

PIGENES

Is it an absolute necessity?

⁷¹ A legendary robber who fitted his victims to a bed by stretching those who were too short and trimming those who were too long; there is a pun on the verb *prokrouein* "to bang first."

⁷² Citing a law that in actuality applied to women.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

Διομήδειά γε.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1030 ὑποστόρεσαι τινα πρῶτα τῆς ὄριγάνου
καὶ κλήμαθ' ὑπόθου συγκλάσασα τέτταρα
καὶ ταινίωσαι καὶ παράθου τὰς ληκύθους
ὕδατός τε κατάθου τούστρακον πρὸ τῆς θύρας.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ἢ μὴν ἔτ' ὡνήσει σὺ καὶ στεφάνην ἔμοι.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1035 νὴ τὸν Δῖ, ἦνπερ ἢ γέ που τῶν κηρύνων
οἶμαι γὰρ ἔνδον διαπεσέσθαι σ' αὐτίκα.

NEANIS

ποῖ τοῦτον ἔλκεις;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

τόνδ' ἔμαυτῆς εἰσάγω.

NEANIS

οὐ σωφρονοῦσά γ'. οὐ γὰρ ἡλικίαν ἔχει
παρὰ σοὶ καθεύδειν τηλικοῦτος ὕν, ἐπεὶ
1040 μήτηρ ἂν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον εἴης ἢ γυνή.
ῶστ' εἰ καταστήσεσθε τοῦτον τὸν νόμον,
τὴν γῆν ἅπασαν Οἰδιπόδων ἔμπλησετε.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Α

ὦ παμβδελυρά, φθονοῦσα τόνδε τὸν λόγον

1112 δὲ γῆ Dobree: δ' ἐγώ α

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Diomedes' necessity!⁷³

PIGENES

Then strew the bier with marjoram, break four vine branches to lay underneath, deck it with ribbons, put the urns alongside, and set the water jug before your doorway.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

I bet you'll end up buying me a wedding garland too!

PIGENES

I sure will, if I can find a waxen one somewhere,⁷⁴ because I think you're going to disintegrate pretty quickly in there!

Enter GIRL.

GIRL

Where are you dragging him off to?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

This is my own man I'm bringing home.

GIRL

That's not very prudent. He's the wrong age to be sleeping with you—you're more his mother than his wife. If you people start enforcing a law like this, you'll fill the whole country with Oedipuses.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

You dirty slut, you've thought up this objection out of pure

⁷³ The origin of this proverb, indicating ultimate compulsion, is variously explained by ancient scholars.

⁷⁴ Waxen garlands were used in funerals.

ARISTOPHANES

ἔξηντρες· ἀλλ' ἐγώ σε τιμωρήσομαι.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1045 νὴ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτῆρα, κεχάρισαι γέ μοι,
ὦ γλυκύτατον, τὴν γραῦν ἀπαλλάξασά μου.
ῶστ' ἀντὶ τούτων τῶν ἀγαθῶν εἰς ἑσπέραν
μεγάλην ἀποδώσω καὶ παχεῖάν σοι χάριν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

αὕτη σύ, ποῖ τονδὶ παραβᾶσα τὸν νόμον
1050 ἔλκεις, παρ' ἐμοὶ τῶν γραμμάτων εἰρηκότων
πρότερον καθεύδειν αὐτόν;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

οἴμοι δείλαιος.
πόθεν ἔξέκυψας, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένη;
τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκείνου τὸ κακὸν ἔξωλέστερον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

βάδιζε δεῦρο.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

μηδαμῶς με περιύδης
ἔλκόμενον ὑπὸ τῆσδ', ἀντιβολῶ σ'.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

1055 ἀλλ' ὁ νόμος ἔλκει σ'.
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ,

οὐκ ἐμέ γ', ἀλλ' Ἐμπουσά τις,
ἔξ αῖματος φλύκταιναν ἡμφιεσμένη.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

envy. But I'll make you pay for it!

FIRST OLD WOMAN goes inside.

EPIGENES

By Zeus the Savior, sweetest, you've done me a favor by getting that crone off my back. For that, come evening, I'll slip you a big, juicy token of my gratitude!

Enter SECOND OLD WOMAN.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Hey you! Where are you taking this man, in violation of the law? It's plainly stated that he's got to sleep with me first.

EPIGENES

Good grief, where did you pop out of, you apparition of damnation? This horror is more revolting than the last one!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Get over here!

EPIGENES

Don't let her drag me away, I beg you!

GIRL runs away.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

It's not me but the law that drags you away.

EPIGENES

No, it's some kind of Empusa⁷⁵ covered with one big blood blister.

⁷⁵ A horrible bogey-woman; for a description cf. *Frogs* 288–96.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

ἔπου, μαλακίων, δεῦρ' ἀνύσας καὶ μὴ λάλει.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἴθι νυν ἔασον εἰς ἄφοδον πρώτιστά με
1060 ἐλθόντα θαρρῆσαι πρὸς ἐμαυτόν· εἰ δὲ μή,
αὐτοῦ τι δρῶντα πυρρὸν ὅψει μ' αὐτίκα
ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

θάρρει, βάδιζ· ἔνδον χεσεῖ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

δέδοικα κάγὼ μὴ πλέον γ' ἢ βούλομαι.
ἀλλ' ἔγγυητάς σοι καταστήσω δύο
ἀξιόχρεως.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

μή μοι καθίστη.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

1065 ποῖ σύ, ποῖ
χωρεῖς μετὰ ταύτης;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

οὐκ ἔγωγ', ἀλλ' ἔλκομαι.
ἀτὰρ ἦτις εἶ γε, πόλλ' ἀγαθὰ γένοιτο σοι,
ὅτι μ' οὐ περιεῦδες ἐπιτριβέντ'. ὁ Ἡράκλεις,
ὁ Πᾶνες, ὁ Κορύβαντες, ὁ Διοσκόρω,
1070 τοῦτ' αὖ πολὺ τούτον τὸ κακὸν ἔξωλέστερον.
ἀτὰρ τί τὸ πρᾶγμ' ἔστ', ἀντιβολῶ, τοντί ποτε;
πότερον πίθηκος ἀνάπλεως ψιμυθίου
ἢ γραῦς ἀνεστηκυῖα παρὰ τῶν πλειόνων;

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Come along, you sissy. This way. Make it snappy, and no back talk.

PIGENES

Wait! May I go to the bathroom first? It would help me get hold of myself. If you don't let me, I'll do something right here and you'll soon see me go brown with fear.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Buck up and get moving; you can shit when we get in the house.

PIGENES

I'm afraid I'll do more than I want! (*indicating his testicles*) But I'll be glad to deposit two valuable sureties with you!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Don't bother.

Enter THIRD OLD WOMAN.

THIRD OLD WOMAN

Hey you! Where are you going with her?

PIGENES

I'm not going anywhere; I'm being kidnapped! But whoever you are, bless you if you don't just stand by and watch me be tormented. (*turning to see Third Old Woman*) Heracles! Pan! Corybantes! Dioscuri! Here's another horror, and much more revolting than the last! Please, someone tell me what in the world it is! A monkey plastered with makeup? A hag arisen from the underworld?

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

μὴ σκῶπτέ μ', ἀλλὰ δεῦρ' ἔπου.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

δευρὶ μὲν οὖν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

ώς οὐκ ἀφῆσω σ' οὐδέποτ'.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

1075 οὐδὲ μὴν ἐγώ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

διασπάσεσθέ μ', ω κακῶς ἀπολούμεναι.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἀκολουθεῖν σε δεῖ κατὰ τὸν νόμον.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

οὐκ, ἦν ἔτέρα γε γραῦς ἔτ' αἰσχίων φανῆ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1080 ἦν οὖν ὑφ' ὑμῶν πρῶτον ἀπόλωμαι κακῶς,
φέρε πῶς ἐπ' ἐκείνην τὴν καλὴν ἀφίξομαι;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

αὐτὸς σκόπει σύ τάδε δέ σοι ποιητέον.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ποτέρας προτέρας οὖν κατελάσας ἀπαλλαγῶ;

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

οὐκ οἶσθα; βαδιεῖ δεῦρ'.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἀφέτω νύν μ' αὐτήι.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

THIRD OLD WOMAN

Cut the jokes and follow me.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Oh no you don't; come along this way.

THIRD OLD WOMAN

I'll never let you go.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Me neither!

EPIGENES

You're going to rip me in half, you hellbound creatures!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

The law says you've got to follow me.

THIRD OLD WOMAN

No it doesn't, not if an old woman appears who's even uglier.

EPIGENES

So tell me, if I'm miserably done in by you two, how will I get to that pretty girl?

THIRD OLD WOMAN

That's your problem. (*lewdly gesturing*) Just now you've got to do this.

EPIGENES

So which one do I have to poke first in order to get away?

THIRD OLD WOMAN

Isn't it obvious? Come this way!

EPIGENES

Then make this one let go of me.

ARISTOPHANES

ΓΡΑΤΣ Β

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἢν ἡδί μ' ἀφῆ.

ГРАТΣ Γ

ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἀφήσω μὰ Δία σ᾽.

ГРАТΣ В

1085 οὐδὲ μὴν ἐγώ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

χαλεπαί γ' ἀν ήστε γενόμεναι πορθμῆς.

ГРАТΣ В

τεή;

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

ἔλκοντε τοὺς πλωτῆρας ἀν ἀπεκναίετε.

ГРАТΣ Γ

σιγῇ βάδιζε δεῦρο.

ГРАТΣ В

μὰ Δῖ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐμέ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

τοντὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα κατὰ τὸ Καννωνοῦ σαφῶς
ψήφισμα· βινεῖν δεῖ με διαλελημένον.
πῶς οὖν δικωπεῖν ἀμφοτέρας δυνήσομαι;

ГРАТΣ В

καλῶς, ἐπειδὴν καταφάγης βολβῶν χύτραν.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

SECOND OLD WOMAN

No! Come this way with me!

EPIGENES

If she'll let go.

THIRD OLD WOMAN

I certainly will not!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Nor will I!

EPIGENES

You two would make rough ferryboat captains.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

How's that?

EPIGENES

You'd tug your passengers hard enough to wear them out.

THIRD OLD WOMAN

Shut up and get moving. This way!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

No, this way!

EPIGENES

This is obviously Cannonus' Law put into practice: I've got to appear in irons and fuck my accusers!⁷⁶ But how can I manage to man two boats with a single oar?

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Just fine—after you've wolfed down a potful of love bulbs.

⁷⁶ Cannonus' Law, datable to the era of the Persian Wars, ordered that those accused of injuring the Athenian people be bound and face (not fuck!) the charge before the people.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

οἵμοι κακοδαιίμων· ἐγγὺς ἡδη τῆς θύρας
ἔλκομενός εἰμ—

ГРАТΣ Γ

ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἔσται σοι πλέον.
Ἐννεσπεσοῦμαι γὰρ μετὰ σοῦ.

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ

1095 μὴ πρὸς θεῶν·
ἐνὶ γὰρ ξυνέχεσθαι κρείττον ἡ δυοῖν κακοῖν.

ΓΡΑΤΣ Γ

νὴ τὴν Ἐκάτην, ἐάν τε βούλῃ γ' οὐ τε μή.

ЕПІГЕННΣ

ῳ τρισκακοδαίμων, εἰ γυναικα δεῖ σαπτὰν
βινέν ὄλὴν τὴν μύκτα καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν.

1100 κάπειτ', ἐπειδὰν τῆσδ' ἀπαλλαγῶ, πάλιν φρύνην ἔχουσαν λήκυθον πρὸς ταῖς γνάθοις. ἄρ' οὐ κακοδαίμων εἰμί: βαρυδαίμων μὲν οὖν, νὴ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτῆρ', ἀνὴρ καὶ δυστυχής, ὅστις τοιούτοις θηρίοις συνέίρξομαι.

1105 δῆμως δ', ἔάν τι πολλὰ πολλάκις πάθω
νύπὸ τοῦνδε τοῦν κασαλβάδουν δεῦρ' ἐσπλέων,
θάψαι μ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ τῷ στόματι τῆς ἐσβολῆς,
καὶ τήνδ' ἄνωθεν ἐπιπολῆς τοῦ σήματος
ζῶσαν καταπιττώσαντες, εἴτα τῷ πόδε

1110 μολυβδοχοήσαντες κύκλῳ περὶ τὰ σφυρὰ
ἄνω πιθέναι πρόφασιν ἀντὶ ληκύθου.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

EPIGENES

Oh, what a sorry end! I'm dragged to the very threshold!

THIRD OLD WOMAN

That's not going to help you: I'm going to fall in right behind you.

EPIGENES

God no: better to grapple with one evil than two!

THIRD OLD WOMAN

By Hecate, you've got no choice in the matter.

EPIGENES

(*to the spectators*) I'm damned three ways from Sunday if I have to fuck an old bag all night and all day, and after I get free of her, start in again on an old toad with a funeral urn already standing by her chops! So aren't I damned? Nay, a man heavily doomed, by Zeus the Savior, and unlucky, to be closeted with such creatures as these! But if the very worst really does befall me as I put into port atop these two floozies, bury me right where I penetrated the channel. (*indicating Third Old Woman*) As for her, while she's still alive, cover her with pitch all over and put her feet in molten lead up to her ankles, then stick her over my grave instead of an urn!

SECOND and THIRD OLD WOMEN drag Epigenes into the house and slam the door behind them.

Enter a tipsy MAID.

ARISTOPHANES

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

ῳ μακάριος μὲν δῆμος, εὐδαιμων δὲ γῆ,
 αὐτῇ τέ μοι δέσποινα μακαριωτάτη,
 ὑμεῖς θ' ὅσαι παρέστατ' ἐπὶ ταῖσιν θύραις,
 1115 οἱ γείτονές τε πάντες οἵ τε δημόται,
 ἐγώ τε πρὸς τούτουσιν ἡ διάκονος,
 ἥτις μεμύρισμαι τὴν κεφαλὴν μυρώμασιν
 ἀγαθοῖσιν, ὁ Ζεῦ. πολὺ δὲ ὑπερπέπαικεν αὖ
 τούτων ἀπάντων τὰ Θάσι' ἀμφορείδια·
 1120 ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ γὰρ ἔμμενει πολὺν χρόνον,
 τὰ δὲ ἄλλ' ἀπανθήσαντα πάντ' ἀπέπτατο,
 ὥστ' ἐστὶ πολὺ βέλτιστα, πολὺ δῆτ'. ὁ θεοί.
 κέρασον ἄκρατον· εὐφρανεῖ τὴν νύχθ' ὀλην
 ἐκλεγομένας ὅ τι ἀν μάλιστ' ὀσμὴν ἔχῃ.
 1125 ἄλλ', ὁ γυναικες, φράσατέ μοι τὸν δεσπότην,
 τὸν ἄνδρ', ὃπου 'στί, τῆς ἐμῆς κεκτημένης.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΑ

αὐτοῦ μένουσ' ἡμῖν γ' ἀν ἔξευρεῖν δοκεῖς.
 μάλισθ' ὅδι γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον ἔρχεται.

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

ῳ δέσποτ', ὁ μακάριε καὶ τρισόλβιε.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἐγώ;

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

1130 σὺ μέντοι, νὴ Δί, ὡς γ' οὐδεὶς ἀνήρ.
 τίς γὰρ γένοιτ' ἀν μᾶλλον ὀλβιώτερος,
 ὅστις πολιτῶν πλεῖον ἡ τρισμυρίων

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

MAID

Blessed citizenry! Favored land! And most blessed of all, our mistress herself, and all you women who stand at our door, and all our neighbors and fellow demesmen, and me too, the maid, with my head perfumed with fine perfumes, Zeus be praised! But far surpassing all these fragrances are those nice little bottles of Thasian wine: they stay in your head a long time, when those others have lost their bouquet and completely evaporated. So they're far the best, yes by far, the gods be praised! Pour it neat and it'll make you merry all night long, if you pick the one with the best bouquet! Women, tell me where master is, I mean my mistress' husband.

CHORUS LEADER

If you wait right here you're bound to run into him. Yes indeed, here he is on his way to dinner now.

Enter BLEPYRUS, garlanded and embracing two Girls.

MAID

Oh master! You happy, you triple-lucky man!

BLEPYRUS

Who, me?

MAID

Sure you, by Zeus, beyond anyone else in the world. Who could be luckier? Out of more than thirty thousand citi-

1166-67 lacunam posuit Meineke, suppl. e.g. Sommerstein

ARISTOPHANES

ὄντων τὸ πλῆθος οὐ δεδείπνηκας μόνος;

КОРТФАІА

εὐδαιμονικόν γ' ἄνθρωπον εἴρηκας σαφῶς.

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

ποῖ ποῖ βαδίζεις;

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

1135 ἐπὶ τὸ δεῦπνον ἔρχομαι.

ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ

νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, πολύ γ' ἀπάντων ὕστατος.

ὅμως δ' ἐκέλευ συλλαβοῦσάν μ' ή γυνή

ἄγειν σε καὶ τασδὶ μετὰ σοῦ τὰς μείρακας.

οῖνος δὲ Χῖός ἐστι περιλελειμμένος

1140 καὶ τἄλλα ἀγαθά. πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ βραδύνετε,

καὶ τῶν θεατῶν εἴ τις εὔνους τυγχάνει

καὶ τῶν κριτῶν εἰ μή τις ἐτέρωσε βλέπει,

ἴτω μεθ' ἡμῶν· πάντα γὰρ παρέξομεν

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

οὐκονν ἄπασι δῆτα γενναίως ἐρεῖς

1145 καὶ μὴ παραλείψεις μηδέν', ἀλλ' ἐλευθέρως

καλεῖς γέροντα, μειράκιον, παιδίσκον; ὡς

τὸ δεῖπνον αὐτοῖς ἐστ' ἐπεσκευασμένον

ἀπαξάπασιν—ἢν ἀπίωσιν οἴκαδε.

ἔγω δὲ πρὸς τὸ δεῖπνον ἥδη πείξομαι.

1150 ἔχω δέ τοι καὶ δᾶδα ταυτηνὶ καλῶς.

КОРТФАІА

τί δῆτα διατρίβεις ἔχων, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄγεις

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

zens you're the only one who hasn't had dinner.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, you make him sound quite a happy fellow.

MAID

Hey, where can you be off to now?

BLEPYRUS

Why, I'm off to dinner.

MAID

By Aphrodite, you're the last one by a mile. Still, your wife told me to gather you up and escort you there, and these girls with you. There's some Chian wine left over, and some other good stuff. So don't be late. And any of you spectators who favor us, and any of you judges who's not looking elsewhere, come along with us: we'll supply everything.

BLEPYRUS

Why don't you be a lady and address all of them, leaving no one out? Be liberal, invite the old man, the boy, the little child: there's dinner specially made for all of them—if they hurry home! Me, I'm shoving off to my own dinner now; (*indicating one of the Girls*) and fortunately I've got this little torch here to light my way!

CHORUS LEADER

Then why waste time here? Come on, take these girls and

ARISTOPHANES

τασδὶ λαβών; ἐν ὅσῳ δὲ καταβαίνεις, ἐγὼ
ἐπάσομαι μέλος τι μελλοδειπνικόν.
σμικρὸν δ' ὑποθέσθαι τοῖς κριταῖσι βούλομαι.

1155 τοῖς σοφοῖς μὲν τῶν σοφῶν μεμνημένοις κρίνειν
ἔμε,
τοῖς γελῶσι δ' ἡδέως διὰ τὸν γέλων κρίνειν ἔμε—
σχεδὸν ἄπαντας οὖν κελεύω δηλαδὴ κρίνειν ἔμε—
μηδὲ τὸν κλῆρον γενέσθαι μηδὲν ἡμῖν αἴτιον,
ὅτι προείληχ¹. ἀλλὰ πάντα ταῦτα χρὴ μεμνημένους
1160 μὴ πιορκεῖν, ἀλλὰ κρίνειν τοὺς χοροὺς ὄρθως ἀεί,
μηδὲ ταῖς κακαῖς ἐταίραις τὸν τρόπον προσεικέναι,
αἱ μόνοι μνήμην ἔχουσι τῶν τελευταίων ἀεί.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ῳ ὥ, ὥρα δῆ,
 ὥ φίλαι γυναικες, εἴπερ μέλλομεν τὸ χρῆμα δρᾶν,
1165 ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον ὑπανακινεῖν. Κρητικῶς οὖν τῷ πόδε
 καὶ σὺ κίνει.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

τοῦτο δρῶ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

καὶ τάσδε νῦν <τὰς μείρακας
 χρὴ συνυπάγειν κοῦφα> λαγαρὰς τοῦν σκελίσκοιν
 τὸν ρύθμον.
 τάχα γὰρ ἔπειστι

¹¹⁷⁶ τρέχε Blaydes: ταχὺ a

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

get going! And while you're on your way down there, I'll sing a little pre-dinner tune.

BLEPYRUS, MAID, and Girls descend into the orchestra.

But first I have a small suggestion for the judges: if you're intelligent, remember the intelligent parts and vote for me; if you've got a sense of humor, remember the jokes and vote for me. Yes, it's virtually all of you that I'm asking to vote for me. And don't hold it against me that the luck of the draw has put me onstage first. So, bearing all this in mind, don't break your oath, but always judge the choruses fairly. Don't act like dishonest courtesans, who only remember their latest companions.

CHORUS

Hey, hey, it's time,
dear ladies, to shake a leg and hop off to dinner,
if we mean to do it at all. So you start moving your
feet too,
to a Cretan tune.⁷⁷

BLEPYRUS
That's what I'm doing!

CHORUS

And these girls too,
so lithe, should join us in lightly moving their gams to
the rhythm.
For soon there'll be served

⁷⁷ Cretans were renowned dancers.

ARISTOPHANES

λοπαδοτεμαχοσελαχογαλεο-
1170 κρανιολεψανοδριμυποτριμματο-
σιλφιολιπαρομελιτοκατακεχυμενο-
κιχλεπικοσσυφοφαττοπεριστερα-
λεκτρυονοπποπιφαλλιδοκιγκλοπε-
λειολαγωοσιραιοβαφητραγα-
1175 λοπτερυγων. σὺ δὲ ταῦτ' ἀκροασάμε-
νος τρέχε καὶ ταχέως λαβὲ τρύβλιον.
εἴτα κόνισαι λαβὼν
λέκιθον, ἵν' ἐπιδειπνῆς.

ΒΛΕΠΤΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ λαιμάττονσί που.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

1180 αἵρεσθ' ἄνω, ίαί, εὐαί·
δειπνήσομεν, εὔοι, εὐαί,
εὐαί, ώς ἐπὶ νίκη.
εὐαί, εὐαί, εὐαί, εὐαί.

ASSEMBLYWOMEN

limpets and saltfish and sharksteak and dogfish
and mullets and oddfish with savory pickle sauce
and thrushes with blackbirds and various pigeons
and roosters and pan-roasted wagtails and larks
and nice chunks of hare marinated in mulled wine
and all of it drizzled with honey and silphium
and vinegar, oil, and spices galore!⁷⁸ Now that you've
heard

what awaits you, run grab your plate quickly,
then raise the dust, but take
some porridge for dinner!

BLEPYRUS

I'm sure that they're stuffing it in.

CHORUS

Lift your legs aloft, hey hey,
We're off to dinner, hoy hoy,
and victory, hurray!
Hurray hurrah!

⁷⁸ In the Greek this list of foods is combined into one huge word.